

WILD WEST WEEKLY

A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES Etc. OF WESTERN LIFE.

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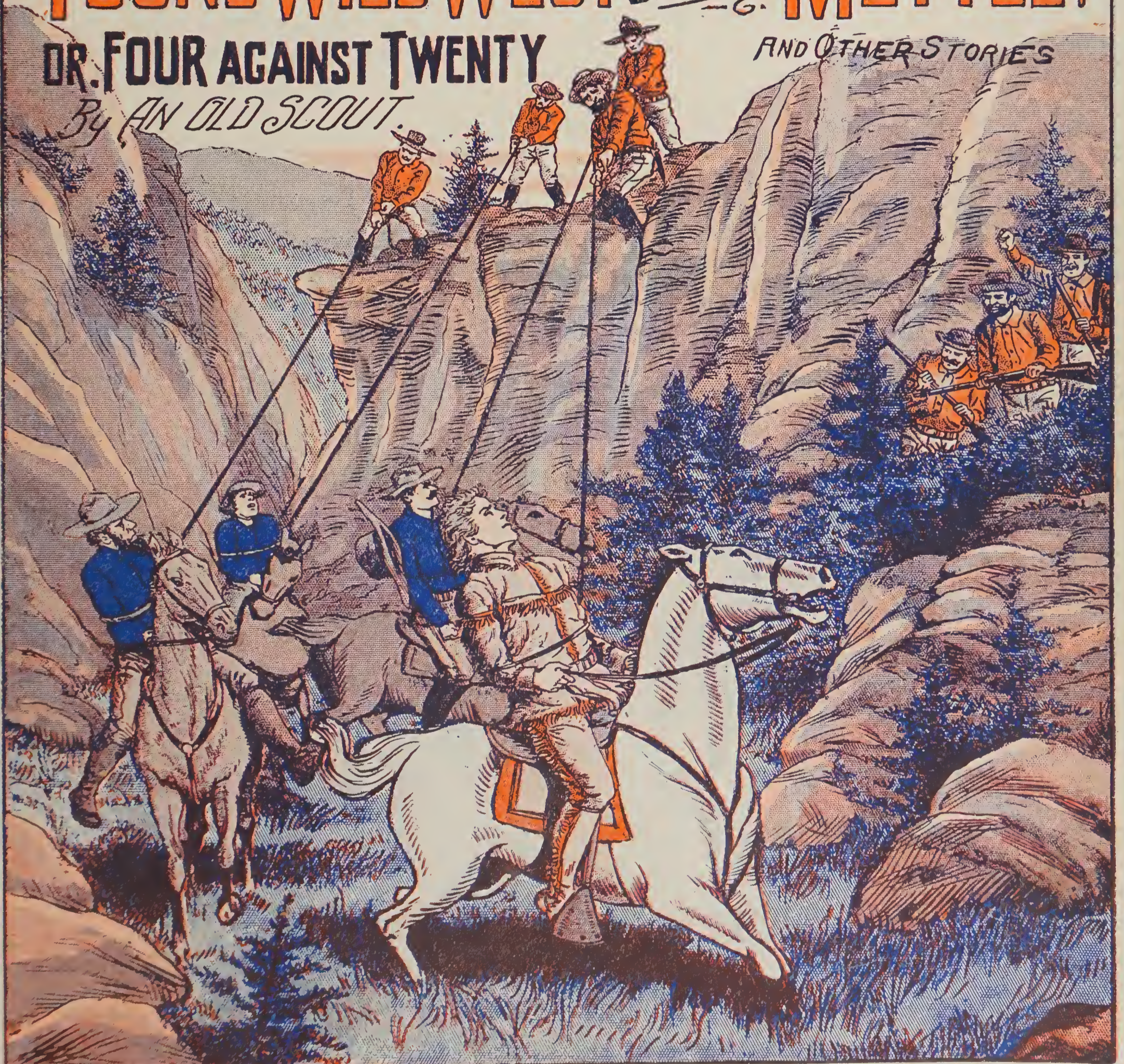
Price 5 Cents.

YOUNG WILD WEST ON HIS METTLE!

OR, FOUR AGAINST TWENTY

AND OTHER STORIES

By AN OLD SCOUT.



As the four unsuspecting riders got beneath them, the rascals let the nooses drop around their bodies, pinioning their arms. Like a pack of wolves the other villains sprang upon the helpless four. It had been a case of four against twenty.

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A Magazine Containing Stories, Sketches, Etc., of Western Life

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Young Wild West on His Mettle

—OR—

FOUR AGAINST TWENTY

By AN OLD SCOUT

CHAPTER I.

THE RACE BETWEEN THE SORREL AND THE ROAN.

"There ain't a man in ther crowd what kin ketch me from here to ther blasted pine! Whoopee! Whoopee! I'm ther slickest thing what ever straddled a horse!"

The speaker was a medium-sized man of thirty, attired in buckskin breeches, blue flannel shirt and light felt sombrero.

He was mounted on a fine-looking roan horse that showed signs of being very speedy.

The man was a type of the rough-and-ready Westerners, some of which can be found to this day; and with a belt that fairly bristled with weapons, he certainly presented a formidable aspect, as he looked at the small crowd of men around him in a defiant manner.

The scene was in front of the Gazoo Hotel, which was located in about the central part of the hustling mining town of Weston, a place with a population of nearly a thousand, and increasing all the time.

"Ain't there no one what's got a fast horrsse?" asked the fellow, a look of disappointment clouding his bronzed face. "I'm Easy Edward, the King-pin of ther Saddle, an' I kin out-ride an' out-shoot any one what ever seen prairie grass, or breathed fresh mountain air. I'm a rip-roarer an' a scorcher from Scorchville; an' I'm as good-natured as a pet lamb. I wouldn't hurt no one what wouldn't hurt me, an' I believe in a square deal every time. My hobby is racehorses, an' I've never been beat out yet! Ain't there some one in ther crowd what thinks he's got a fast horse, an' knows how to ride him? Come, now! There ain't one of yer that kin beat me to ther blasted pine."

The blasted pine referred to was about half a mile down the straight road that ran through the town and then wound along to Devil Creek, about eighteen or twenty miles distant.

Its broken top could be plainly seen from where the man sat in the saddle, and he seemed eager to race with some one to it.

Easy Edward, as he called himself, had scarcely uttered the words when a dashing-looking young fellow, mounted on a magnificent sorrel stallion, rode up.

"Here comes Young Wild West!" cried one of the miners in the crowd. "Now, then, stranger, let's hear yer shout that out ag'in."

"Young Wild West, hey?" queried Easy Edward, pulling his steed around so he faced the new arrival. "Well, he is a likley looking lad, I must say; and that sorrel is as fine a lookin' critter as I ever set eyes on. Howsumever, I'll tell him jest what I said to you fellers. I'm Easy Edward, ther Klag-pin of ther Saddle, an' I kin out-ride an' out-shoot any

one what ever seen prairie grass or breathed fresh mountain air. I'm a rip-roarer an' a scorcher from Scorchville, an' I'm as good-natured as a pet lamb. I wouldn't hurt no one what wouldn't hurt me, an' I believe in a square deal every time. My hobby is racehorses, an' I've never been beat out yet! Ain't there some one in ther crowd what thinks he's got a fast horse, an' knows how to ride him? Come, now! There ain't one of yer what kin beat me to ther blasted pine! There! That's just exactly what I said, I guess. How does it strike you an' your scriel, youngster?"

"I will ride you a race to the blasted pine and back," was the quick reply. "Like you, I am fond of a fast horse and I have a great hobby for riding."

As Young Wild West spoke, his dark, handsome eyes sparkled and a faint smile crept over his finely molded features.

He was certainly a splendid specimen of budding manhood—a full grown boy of the true Western type. A wealth of chestnut hair hung down over his shoulders in such profusion that many a girl would have envied him.

A well-fitting riding suit of buckskin trimmed with green silk fringe, brown leather riding boots and a pearl-colored sombrero with a green cord woven around it, completed his costume.

The tail of the stallion he was mounted upon just touched the ground, and the trappings he had upon him were beautiful and costly.

Young Wild West, the Prince of the Saddle and the Champion Deadshot of the West, mounted on the sorrel stallion he had tamed and named Spitfire, certainly made an imposing, not to say dashing, picture.

The boy had scarcely heard what Easy Edward had to say, and answered him, when three more riders came dashing upon the scene.

These were Cheyenne Charlie, Jim Dart and Jack Robedee, the partners of Young Wild West in his mining business and his tried and true friends of the prairie and mountains.

"I'm mighty glad to hear you say you'll race with me," said the fellow who called himself the Kin-pin of the Saddle, and a look of admiration which he did not try to suppress crossed his countenance.

"Well, I have ridden my horse thirty miles this morning at a pretty sharp clip, but I guess I can beat you to that blasted tree and back, for all that," was the calm retort. "Say when you are ready, my friend."

"Well, as soon as a couple of men ride out to the tree an' stay there, so's they kin see that we both turn ther tree afore we start to come back, I'm ready."

"Very well; who will you have to attend to that duty?"

"I'm a stranger here, so I'll leave that to you. I'm putty

sure that you wouldn't attempt to cheat, an' I know I won't."

"Then what is the use of sending any one over there?"

"No use; only it is customary when races are run where there has to be a turn made."

"Well, Jim Dart and Jack Robedee will ride over, then. Go ahead, boys."

There were only three mounted men there, besides Young Wild West and Easy Edward, so it fell upon two of our hero's friends to fill the bill.

That left his remaining partner, Cheyenne Charlie, to stay with the crowd at the finish.

Brown, the proprietor of the hotel, was delighted when Young Wild West accepted the challenge, as he was a devoted admirer of the boy.

"I'll do ther startin', if you don't object," he said. "When you git ready I'll fire a shot from my revolver, an' then you kin light out as though a streak of greased lightnin' was after you."

"You suit me good," retorted Easy Edward, smiling in a very confident way.

"And I am satisfied," spoke up Wild. "Go on, Jim and Jack."

The two did not wait for any further words, but at once started on a gallop for the blasted pine tree.

As soon as they got there Brown gave the command for the two riders to line up.

With the grace and ease of an experienced horseman, the King-pin rounded to and brought his steed to a halt at the side of Young Wild West.

The spirited stallion was dancing like a circus horse, eager to get away, our hero sitting in the saddle as though he was part of the animal.

The wise ones in the crowd nodded and "allowed" that it was a case of being pretty well matched.

"Are you ready?" called out Brown.

"Yes," came the answer from both.

Then he raised his revolver over his head, and after a wait of a second, pulled the trigger.

Crack!

As the report sounded the two horses shot forward simultaneously as though they were one and the same.

A shout went up from the crowd, which had now increased to two score or more, and some one shouted a cheer for Young Wild West.

Both riders felt confident of winning, since neither had ever been beaten, and they were bringing all they knew about horsemanship to the front to help them.

When a hundred yards had been covered the horses were neck and neck.

Then the roan forged to the front suddenly and led by half a length.

But if his friends could have seen his face just then they would have noticed that Young Wild West wore a confident smile.

He had been in more than one race, and he never believed in leading at the start.

The truth of it was that he was holding the stallion back.

When the turning point came he would show Easy Edward his heels, if it was really in him to do so.

And our hero felt certain that it was.

The road was pretty level, and as the riders passed along like flying meteors, people rushed out to see them, knowing full well that something out of the ordinary was taking place.

Half-way to the turning point Young Wild West was a length behind, but he was riding with the regularity of a clock, while his opponent seemed to be doing his best.

Half a mile is but a short distance for two such horses as they were, and the blasted pine was reached in no time.

Easy Edward rounded the tree a dozen feet ahead of Wild, and he seemed to be very much elated.

"Whoopee! Whoopee!" he shouted. "Come on, you tackler! I'll lead ther way back for yer!"

"You've got it easy, Wild," said Jim Dart, as the boy rounded the tree.

A nod was the answer.

Then Young Wild West let Spitfire go for all he was worth.

At every leap of the sinewy and almost tireless legs the gap was closed perceptibly.

A couple of seconds later Easy Edward cast a glance over his shoulder, and then the look on his face turned from exultation to one of deep concern.

The sorrel was overhauling him with the greatest of ease.

Two more seconds and he was only half a length ahead.

The King-pin urged his horse to go faster, and did succeed in causing him to make a spurt for a few yards.

Then something happened that nearly took his breath away!

Young Wild West shot past him so suddenly that Easy Edward almost thought his racer was standing still.

But he did not give up, and, for the first time during the race, he sank the spurs deep into the flanks of the faithful steed that was doing its utmost for him.

With a snort of pain the roan plunged onward.

But it was useless.

Young Wild West was leaning slightly forward in the saddle, riding with a slack rein, and Spitfire was widening the gap of his own accord all the time.

Half the way in Wild was a good four lengths ahead, and tightening the rein again, he held his distance to the finish.

There was great cheering when he came in an easy winner, some of the miners becoming so enthusiastic that they threw their hats in the air.

Easy Edward rode on over the finish line for a distance of a couple of hundred yards, and then allowed his horse to walk back.

"I want to shake hands with yer, Young Wild West," he said, as he came close enough to Wild. "You are ther best I ever seen, an' that horse of yours is a wonder. You beat me fair an' square, an' you could have made it a good deal worse if you'd wanted to. I know what's what when I see it right before me. I've got a mighty fast horse, an' I wouldn't take a whole lot for him, but he ain't nowhere alongside of that sorrel. I ain't glad that you beat me, but I'm mighty glad to shake hands with yer."

Young Wild West took the horny hand and shook it warmly.

He was enough of a student of human nature to know that the man was thoroughly in earnest in what he said.

"Well, Mr. Easy Edward, as you call yourself, you are not the first one who has been deceived in my horse," he replied. "I have raced several times since I became his owner, and I have always won as easy as I did with you. I suppose, though, that some one will come along with a better horse some of these days and take Spitfire's laurels from him."

"I don't believe that. I don't believe there is a horse livin' what kin beat your sorrel; an' I don't believe that there is a man livin' what kin ride like you! I'm speakin' out my thoughts, Young Wild West, an' in some part of ther Western country my thoughts are allowed to be worth somethin'."

"Thank you for the compliments you are paying me and my horse. I always—"

Our hero did not finish what he was going to say, for at that instant a loud yell rang out, followed by a volley of pistol shots.

Instantly the eyes of the crowd were turned up the street to the mountain road that led to the town of Spodulicks and the prairie beyond the mountain range.

Riding into town was a band of about twenty cowboys, who, no doubt, were very much under the influence of liquor, judging by the reckless manner in which they rode.

CHAPTER II.

A MILLION DOLLAR DEAL.

The reckless appearing horsemen were heading straight for the Gazoo Hotel, so the crowd drew back out of the street to give them room.

Young Wild West and his three partners dismounted and tied their horses, as did Easy Edward.

The cowboys came up with a rattle and clatter regardless of anything that might have been in the way, causing Cheyenne Charlie, the scout, to jump upon the sidewalk to save himself from being trampled under the hoofs of the horses.

"Git out of ther way, you miserable prairie dog!" howled one of the new arrivals in a voice like a fog horn. "Couldn't you see us comin'? We are just in from Hopkins' Ranch, an' we are goin' to make Weston howl."

The speaker wore a yellow shirt and flaming red tie, and forcing his horse over to the spot where Young Wild West had tied his sorrel, he pushed against the animal and forced him upon the sidewalk.

Then our hero and Cheyenne Charlie started to say something at the same time.

But Wild held up his hand to his friend and stopped him.

"I'll attend to this fellow," he said, in a low tone.

"See here, my friend," he said, coolly, "that is a valuable

horse, and you want to be careful how you crowd him away from that hitching post."

"Crawling lizards!" cried the cowboy, who was evidently the boss of the crowd. "What do I hear? Youngster, was you talkin' to me?"

"I don't know as I was addressing any one else," was the retort, in the same easy tone. "That is my horse, and I want you to be a little careful how you shove him around."

"What!" And with remarkable quickness the fellow raised his whip and dealt Spitfire a sharp blow over the haunches.

The spirited animal resented this uncalled-for treatment by lifting his hind hoofs as quick as a flash, and the cowboy's horse caught the full force of the kick in the stomach.

Then both animals plunged at a great rate, and the result was that the man slid off to the ground.

Wild was doing his utmost to calm Spitfire, and he did not succeed in doing so until he felt a hand on his shoulder.

A pair of angry eyes glared at him, and the flaming red tie flaunted in his face as though it was taunting him.

"Youngster," growled the cowboy leader, making a move as though he meant to shake the boy. "you—you——"

That was all he said, for at that instant Young Wild West's right fist shot out and caught him squarely in the mouth.

Then he found himself staring into the muzzle of a revolver.

"Get down on your knees and apologize, you big bluffing coward! Do as I say, or I will let a streak of daylight through your head!"

As this startling command came from the lips of Young Wild West the rest of the cowboys sat still in the saddle and looked at him in mute astonishment.

Their leader, Lanky Lew, to be talked to by a boy in that kind of fashion! It seemed as though they must be dreaming.

But there was no dream about it, for there he was gradually assuming a kneeling position before the handsome boy, whose face was as calm as a summer morning.

Then, just as though it had been preconcerted, a simultaneous gasp of astonishment went up from the band.

Lanky Lew, his mouth bleeding profusely from the effects of the blow he had received, certainly looked the picture of humiliation as he dropped upon both knees before Young Wild West, still gazing into the muzzle of the revolver that had followed him as he dropped.

"You've got ther drop on me, young feller," he said, in a husky voice. "I 'pologize!"

"All right, then. Get up!"

Like a whipped cur, the man arose to his feet.

But the moment he had assumed his upright position his manner changed.

Wild had lowered his revolver, and thinking his chance had come, the cowboy pulled his shooter.

But before he had it from the holster fairly Cheyenne Charlie knocked it from his hand.

With a howl like that of a wounded bear Lanky Lew turned upon the scout, jerking his keen-edged hunting-knife from its sheath as he did so.

He made a lunge at Charlie which certainly would have reached a vital spot if he had not jumped back out of the way.

"So you want to fight it out on that line, do you?" the scout cried, and out came his knife. "Well, if you want to run ther risk of havin' a piece of cold steel dive between your ribs, come on."

He backed to an open spot on the sidewalk and the enraged man followed him up.

Then began a duel with hunting-knives.

No one made a move to interfere, though the cowboys crowded close to the spot to get a good view of the contest.

Back and forth the supple bodies of the two swayed.

That they were both experts in the art of handling a hunting-knife could be seen.

Lanky Lew was the aggressor, but he soon found that he had to pursue different tactics, for he had received a glancing stroke in the wrist and the blood was streaming from the slight cut it made.

"Hot blood for Cheyenne Charlie!" cried out Jack Robeson. "It's a five to one bet that he settles ther hash of Mister Lanky Lew!"

No one offered to accept the wager, which fact showed that the best of the horsemen did not have the greatest confidence in their leader.

As soon as the cowboy began to act with a little more caution Charlie sailed right into him.

In less than thirty seconds from the time the fight began he had his opponent virtually at his mercy.

It was plain that Charlie did not want to take the man's life, for he certainly had more than one opportunity to do it.

He kept right on parrying the vicious lunges made at him and avoiding every downward thrust with the greatest ease.

"Look out for your heart!" he cried, suddenly, and involuntarily Lanky Lew tried to protect his breast.

Then Cheyenne Charlie's knife descended with a lightning-like sweep and his opponent's knife fell to the ground with a ring.

There was not a cowboy in the gang who did not expect to see his leader step out at that moment, but nothing of the kind occurred.

Instead, the scout dealt the defeated man a blow on the side of the head with the back of his hand and sent him sprawling upon the ground.

"I'll let you live, you miserable coyote," he said. "Young Wild West didn't want your life, 'cause it wasn't worth takin', an' I'm of ther same opinion as he is."

"Thankee, stranger, I'm done," was the retort, as the fellow got upon his feet and made for the bar. "I ain't no hog; I knows when I've got enough."

"Well!" exclaimed Easy Edward, "if that ain't about the best I ever seen. I'll eat my hat! Young Wild West, you an' Cheyenne Charlie kin beat ther world. I'm awful glad I come over to Weston. Let's liquor up."

He led the way into the hotel, and all hands followed, including the cowboys, who were dismounting in a hurry, so as not to be left.

Proprietor Brown had just tapped a cask of new cider that morning, and when Young Wild West came up to the bar, he said:

"I've got something that'll jest suit you, Wild. You don't drink whisky, so a little of this cider will do you good."

"All right, Brown, I'll try a glass of it."

"You don't drink whisky, hey?" spoke up Easy Edward in surprise. "Why, how is that?"

"Oh, I don't know, unless it is because I made up my mind, when I was a little fellow that I would never touch the stuff."

"An' you have stuck to it?"

"Yes."

"It don't seem possible. An' you livin' in a place like this."

"There is nothing strange about that. It is easy enough to keep a resolution if you really want to keep it. If you don't want to you will break it soon enough. I know, and you know, that liquor is not good for a man, unless it is used strictly for medical purposes. I guess you will admit that I am a great deal better off by leaving it alone."

"I know you are, my boy. Give me your hand on that! I hope you never will touch it. But as for me—I drink it whenever I feel like it, and that's putty often. Here she goes, boys!" and Easy Edward raised his glass to his lips.

When every one had swallowed their drinks he paid the bill, showing that he had considerable money with him.

Young Wild West noticed that the eyes of Lanky Lew, who was standing close by, fairly glistened when they rested on the money.

He looked like anything else but a man who had gone through what he had in the last few minutes.

"He is a man whose greed for riches makes him forget everything else," thought our hero. "But he is a dangerous fellow, for all that. I believe he would kill a man for a few dollars. I shall keep a good eye on him while he stays in Weston."

The cowboys did not appear to have much money, for none of them gave the order to "set 'em up again."

Quite likely they had come into the town for the purpose of doing as they pleased, and expected to get all they wanted for nothing.

But Young Wild West and Cheyenne Charlie had taken all such ideas out of their heads.

When Wild and Easy Edward walked out upon the little stoop in front of the hotel they came out also.

Lanky Lew had wiped the blood from his face, and without a word to any one he vaulted into the saddle and rode over toward the Ram's Horn, followed by his gang.

"They'll be suited over there, I reckon," remarked Brown. "Ther Ram's Horn seems to capture about all ther 'bad men' that come in town. Well, Bowery Bill is welcome to 'em. I don't want 'em."

"Bowery Bill has done well to keep above ground as long as he has," spoke up Jim Dart. "That fellow is a bad egg,

but he is just chte enough to keep out of scrapes. His wife is a schemer, too, and between the two of them they run things along in what seems to be an honest way."

"The keeper of the Ram's Horn has been in more than one plot to lay me low," said Young Wild West. "I am sure of that, but I can't prove it."

"I reckon I'll take a run around an' see this Bowery Bill some night afore I leave town," observed Easy Edward. "Mebbe I kin learn somethin' that will be to your advantage, providin' that I play off that I'm a hard case."

"You could probably do that. All you will have to do is to just begin to run me down to him, and then you will see how quickly he will join in with you. I don't know this for sure, but I think so."

As Wild said this he went over to where his horse was standing, and told Easy Edward he would be glad to have him call at the office of the Wild West Mining and Improvement Company any time he felt like doing so.

The King-pin of the Saddle said he would call, but not until after he had first paid a visit to the Ram's Horn.

"You see, I've taken a big notion to you," he added, "an' if I kin do anything to benefit you, I want to do it."

Wild and his three partners now started for the office.

They had been out for a ride, more to exercise their horses than anything else, and had arrived in town in time to participate in the events just recorded.

The office of the Wild West Mining and Improvement Company was no mean arrangement.

It had been remodeled since it was first erected, and now it would compare with anything in that line in Deadwood, or any other town in the Territory of Dakota.

As the four rode up to the office and dismounted, Rex Moore, secretary of the company, came out and told Young Wild West that there was a gentleman inside waiting to see him.

Wondering who it could be, the prince of the saddle turned his sorrel stallion over to the care of the darky who did the outside work around the house he and Jim Dart keep bachelors' hall in, and went in.

A well-dressed man, who appeared to be very business-like in appearance, arose and extended his hand.

"You are Young Wild West, I believe," he said, as the boy shook hands with him.

"Yes, sir; that is my name," he replied.

"You are the head of the railroad company here, I understand?"

"Well, I suppose you might call me the head of it."

"Ah, I am glad to meet you. I have been waiting here over an hour for you. Well, as my time is limited, I will get right down to business. I believe you gave the Grand Island people an option on the purchase of the branch you built from Spondulicks here?"

"Yes, sir," answered Wild, knowing perfectly well what his business was now.

"And your figure was?"

"One million dollars."

"Ah, yes; I believe it was. But I guess I had better introduce myself. I am here to do business with you. My name is Field; here is my card."

"Very well, Mr. Field, proceed at your leisure."

"As I said before, my time is limited. So I will get right down to business. I am here to accept your option. We have concluded to buy your branch in."

"Very well, sir; we will go over to the bank and fix up the matter at once. Our lawyer has an office in the bank building, and we have just time to catch him before he goes to dinner."

One, to hear Young Wild West talk, would have thought he was simply bargaining for the sale of a small piece of property, or a pack-horse.

He did not act at all as though there was a million dollars to be turned into the treasury of the railroad company by his saying the word.

And Field was somewhat on the same line. He had been sent there to buy in the road, and it mattered not to him what it cost, whether it was a hundred dollars or a million.

"Come on, boys," said Wild, turning to Charlie, Jim and Jack, who were standing in the doorway listening to the conversation. "The Grand Island people have accepted our terms on the purchase of the railroad, and Mr. Field has come over to fix up the business. We will go right down to the bank with him."

"All right," was the reply, and the five at once set out.

In less than half an hour the papers were made out and the transfer made.

Young Wild West and his three partners were no longer interested in the railroad company.

Some of the other stockholders were a little shy about selling out, and when Wild explained it to them on the quiet that it was more than probable that the Grand Island people would go right in to make a double track, which was something that would not be necessary in some few years, and that they would be assessed for more than the full amount of their holdings, they sold out readily enough.

Lawyer Field went away on the train that left Weston at two o'clock.

It had been one of the quickest million dollar transactions ever made.

The truth of it was that our friends were real glad to get the road off their hands.

It paid them, to be sure, but their mining interests paid far better, and now they would have the opportunity to devote all their time to that end.

CHAPTER III.

EASY EDWARD HAS SOME FUN.

Easy Edward was a remarkable man in some ways.

He had made two or three fortunes at mining in the Black Hills, and he was just spending the last one.

He was as honest as the day is long, and was an expert horseman.

He had traveled over a bigger portion of the Black Hills than any other man had been known to do, and what he did not know about the various mining towns in that vicinity was hardly worth knowing.

But for all this, he had never been in Weston before this day.

The miner had often heard of Weston and Young Wild West, but he never believed half of what he heard.

Hence his idea that he could beat the young prince of the saddle in a race.

One of the remarkable things about Easy Edward was that he was a born ventriloquist.

He had never trained himself in the art, but he could talk in half a dozen different tones and apparently send his voice where he pleased.

If he had been educated and cultivated his gift he would surely have been the wonder of the age in that particular line.

After Young Wild West and his three chums had taken their departure Easy Edward went back to the hotel.

Brown had gone out somewhere, but his trusted man, John Sedgwick, was there attending to business.

There were about half a dozen men in the room, most of whom were miners who were satisfied to earn enough to keep them in liquor and tobacco.

Our friend did not have much use for such men, as he was a hustler himself, and not given to loating until he had made his pile.

Then he generally sported until he had spent it.

After that he would strike a new field and go back to work.

Walking up to the bar, he said:

"Give us a drink, young feller. I'm goin' to stand treat for the crowd."

"All right," answered the bartender. "What will you have, gentlemen?"

There was only one thing that they were liable to ask for, and that was whisky, but John Sedgwick asked the question from force of habit.

He had been clerk in several large places in the East, and that was probably why he was given to asking the question.

"What'll I have?" he answered. "Why, rusty nails and vinegar, of course. Give ther rest ther same dose. I guess they won't object. Say, that Young Wild West is about ther slickest piece of goods I ever run across. I'm awful glad I come over to Weston."

"Young Wild West is one of the finest the earth has produced," retorted the bartender, as he placed the bottle and glasses on the bar.

"There is some folks as don't think that way," remarked one of the miners as he poured out his drink.

"Of course," said Easy Edward, quickly. "but you ain't one of 'em, are you?"

"Well, I can't say as he ever done anything for me," was the reply.

"See here, my friend. I reckon ther place for you to hang out is over at ther Ram's Horn. Any one as don't like Young Wild West ain't got no business hangin' around this ranch. I never heard it said, but I'll bet it's right."

The miner, who was a cowardly fellow, reddened at this, but did not offer to resent it.

"I didn't think you would have much use for him arter he beat you at racin'." he ventured.

"Much use for him! Why, that made me have more use for him than I would have had in a week. I've been lookin' a long time for some one who owned a better horse, an' who could ride better than me. I jest think Young Wild West is ther best feller that ever buckled a belt on! An' I'll bet you do, too. Don't you think so?"

"Of course I do," was the reply. "I jest said that 'cause I thought you didn't like him. I——"

"You lie, you sneakin' coyote!"

This unexpected remark came from the doorway, and with a bound the fellow was there to see who uttered it.

But there was not a soul to be seen, and he, as well as every one in the room, was mystified.

We may add that, with the exception of Easy Edward, every one was mystified.

When the miner could not find the man who called him a liar he wanted to fight very much.

"I'll fill that feller full of lead," he said. "Jest wait till I catch him."

"Well, come in here and try it!"

This time the voice came from the back room, or seemed to, rather.

The fellow hesitated a moment, and then noticing that all hands were waiting for him to keep his word, he crept softly to the door of the room and thrust his revolver in and fired.

"Ha, ha, ha!" came the voice from the front door again. "I'm here now. Why don't you come out and shoot me? You don't dare to, you sneaking coyote; 'cause if you come out here I'll make a pepper-box of yer!"

This so enraged the fellow that he rushed out post haste, only to find no one there, as before.

Then a voice suddenly came from under the bar.

"Let me git out, bartender, I'm goin' to shoot that lazy coyote. He ain't no good, anyhow, an' he jest hangs around here to learn what he kin, an' then go over to the Ram's Horn an' tell it."

This puzzled the bartender more than any one else in the place, and he began rummaging among the barrels stowed behind the bar in search of the supposed man.

"See here," exclaimed Easy Edward, in his natural voice, "are you as bad as that feller what's hid around here says you are?"

"No," was the retort.

"Then if I was you I'd find him and give him what he deserves."

"I can't find him."

"You can't, hey?"

"No; kin you?"

"Yes."

"Well, find him for me, then."

"Well, here he is. I'm ther man."

"Pshaw!"

"No pshaw about it. Don't you believe me?"

"No."

"Well, all right; I ain't him, then."

Sedgwick, the bartender, who was a pretty shrewd young man, winked at the ventriloquist.

He had "tumbled," but he was not the sort to give the thing away.

"I guess it is the boss who has been hollering upstairs through a knot-hole and having some fun with you, Sykes," he observed.

"Do you think so?" asked the miner.

"I can't account for it in any other way."

"Well, it is all right, then. I will take a whole lot of fun-making from Brown."

Easy, as we will call him for short, thought he had practised about enough for the time being.

It had just occurred to him that it would be best to keep his wonderful gift a secret for a while.

He intended to go over to the Ram's Horn and see Bowery Bill, and it might be that he would do a little talking there.

As good as he was at the art he never practised it much. It was only when he was in a jolly frame of mind that he thought of it.

And he had just imbibed enough of the "rusty nails and vinegar" to put him in a jolly mood.

He concluded to go over and see Bowery Bill right now, and as soon as all hands had accepted the theory that it had been the boss talking through a knot-hole from above, he said to the bartender:

"I guess I'll go over where our friend was advised to go. I want to see what this Bowery Bill looks like."

Then in an undertone he added:

"Don't say anything."

"Certainly not," was the reply. "You are the best I ever saw at the business. Come back again, won't you?"

"Oh, I'll be back. Don't you worry about that!"

Then he went out and, mounting his roan horse, headed for the Ram's Horn.

When he got there he dismounted, and in his free-and-easy fashion sauntered inside.

The gang of cowboys were there, and they seemed to be making merry.

Easy was quite certain that the one-eyed man behind the bar was Bowery Bill, so he walked up and exclaimed:

"Hello, Bowery! How are you?"

"First rate!" was the retort. "Where do you hail from?"

"Denver."

"Ah! is that so? Some one recommended you to drop in an' see me, I s'pose."

"Yes; two or three saloon-keepers over there told me I ought to drop in an' see Bowery Bill when I got to Weston."

"Well, I've got lots of friends in Denver, an' I'm always glad to meet any one that comes from 'em. What'll you have?"

Easy gave his order, and the two drank together.

"See here!" exclaimed the miner, suddenly, as though he had just thought of it; "what sort of a feller is this Young Wild West? I thought I had ther best horse in creation, but I run a race with him a little while ago an' he beat me like a dog."

The landlord winked his single eye in a significant manner.

"He is not the sort for such as you an' me," he answered.

"I reckon not."

"He is too good to live, really."

"Well, why in thunder don't he die, then?"

"That's jest where ther trouble comes in. He's altogether too soon for most people. He's got a charmed life, I do believe."

"I don't care about that. I calculate that I'll stay 'round these diggin's long enough to fix him. I owe him a grudge for makin' a fool of me this mornin', an' you bet that I'll pay him with ther full interest."

Bowery Bill was delighted to hear this kind of talk from a stranger and, leaning over, he whispered:

"Would you like to jine a gang that's bein' organized jest to down Young Wild West?"

CHAPTER IV.

THE BAND OF TWENTY.

"Would I like to jine a gang organized on purpose to down Young Wild West! Well, you kin jest bet I would!" exclaimed Easy Edward. "Say, you don't mean that you kin work it so I kin jine, do yer?"

The two were talking at the head of the bar away from the drunken crowd of cowboys, and no one could hear what they said.

Bowery Bill must have come to the conclusion that the stranger was a villain like himself.

Anyhow, it was the custom for strangers who came into town and got the worst end of it, after running in contact with Young Wild West, to come over to the Ram's Horn and tell their troubles over the bar.

None but genuine scoundrels ever got in trouble with the fearless young prince of the saddle, and no one knew that better than Bowery Bill.

So he concluded that Easy Edward was one of this sort, since he had been badly beaten in a race by him.

"I kin work it, I know. You come in here to-night about nine o'clock, an' I'll introduce you to some men what will tell you all about it, an' you kin jine right away, if you want to."

"All right. You kin jest bet that I'll be here. Let's you an' me have another drink."

The drinks were swallowed, and then the two shook hands, after which Easy Edward went out and mounted his horse.

He had engaged dinner at the Gazoo, and it was high time for it, so he rode over.

But before going he told Bowery Bill that he had paid two days in advance to Brown, and that was an excellent excuse for not putting up there.

Bowery Bill was very much pleased at his meeting with Easy Edward.

He had heard all about the race before the miner came over to his place, and he felt that such a man would prove a powerful factor in the gang that was being organized.

But he had trouble ahead of him just now, as the cowboys had spent the limited amount of cash they had and were asking for credit.

There were so many of them that he could not hope to drive them out, so he thought it best to let them have the drinks.

He thought over the matter after giving the second round, and then hit upon a scheme to save his whisky.

He had a big bottle which contained a drug, which was used on the innocent ones who happened to stop there with a whole lot of money, and could not be induced to play cards.

A few drops of it would put a man to sleep in short order.

The proprietor of the questionable place figured that if he could put the wild gang that was having its own way asleep it would be a great saving for him.

They would not wake up before night, and by that time he would have enough of his cronies there to attend to the cowboys, in case they became ugly.

Lanky Lew had become reckless and insulting again, and when he ordered the bartender to "set 'em up again" at the expense of the house, he drew his revolver and thrust it in his face.

"One minute, boys. I'll treat you jest once more," said Bowery Bill, who was hurriedly pouring some of the drug into a bottle that was half full of liquor. "I'll do it jest once more, an' then I hope you'll be satisfied. It costs money to buy rum, an' you can't expect me to give it away."

"You'll git your money when I come 'round ag'in," was the retort. "Hurry up, now! We want to drink!"

Then he began to shoot at a picture on the wall at the farther end of the room, the rest of the reckless men joining in the sport.

Bowery Bill did hurry, and the doctored bottle was placed on the bar.

Thinking it not likely that they would get any more in that place, the cowboys filled their glasses to the brim and drained them at a gulp.

Then they began to dance wildly about and indulged in more shooting, much to the proprietor's alarm.

"All right," he muttered. "You'll soon stop it, anyway, an' then my turn will come. I reckon them shooters an' knives you've got are worth putty near as much as what you owe, anyway, an' mebber a little more."

The rascally landlord would not have thought of getting his pay this way if they had not made such a display of their weapons.

His face gradually became wreathed in smiles as he saw that the drug was taking effect.

In less than five minutes the shooting had ceased, though the room was full of smoke.

One by one the cowboys became drowsy and went staggering to the back rooms of the place.

Lanky Lew was the last one left in the barroom, and it suddenly occurred to him that something was wrong.

"What's ther matter, anyhow?" he roared. "That stuff you sell for whisky is rank pizen, landlord! It's knockin' me out, which is somethin' that no rum ever done afore. You have pizened the whole lot of us, I'll bet! I know you have," and he reeled about the room, just able to keep upon his feet, and no more.

Suddenly he wheeled around and fired a shot at Bowery Bill.

The bullet narrowly missed the rascal's head and buried itself in one of the shelves behind the bar.

"So that's your game, is it?" he retorted. "Well, take that!" and he sent an answering shot which took the cowboy leader between the eyes and snuffed out his life.

It was not the first life Bowery Bill had taken, but he was slightly unnerved, for all that.

"Come," he said to his bartender, "git hold of him! We've got to put him away where he'll never be seen again!"

It just happened that there was not another person in the room at the time, and things could not have been better for him.

The two picked up the body and dragged it into the room that opened at the end of the bar.

Some of the drugged men were in there, but they were sound asleep.

Leaving the bar to take care of itself, Bowery Bill closed and locked the door, and then lifted a trap-door almost in the center of the apartment.

The body of the reckless Lanky Lew was tumbled into the cellar as though it had been a bag of rags.

The trap-door was closed, and with a sigh of relief the proprietor unlocked the door again.

"Give me a drink of that good stuff," he exclaimed, hoarsely. "Then you go down an' bury ther fool in ther pit."

He poured the fiery stuff into him without making so much as a wink, and then, as the bartender retired to do his bidding, he walked out on the porch and sat down in a chair.

"He'll be ther fust one ever dumped down there that we didn't git any money out of," he muttered. "Well, it could not be helped. He knowed that I had drugged him, an' there would have been no end of trouble with him when he come to. Ther rest we kin manage, I guess, if they'll only sleep till Spotty comes over."

Things went on much the same as usual, and finally night came.

Shortly after darkness set in three horsemen rode up to the Ram's Horn and dismounted.

Bowery Bill was behind the bar when they entered the place. His face lighted up when he saw them.

"I'm mighty glad you've come, Spotty," he said.

"Why, what's up?" was the reply from a bushy whiskered fellow in a corduroy suit.

"I've had a whole lot of trouble with a lot of cowpunchers that come here this afternoon. They didn't have a cent to spend, an' they cut up so I had to drug 'em. I had to shoot ther leader of 'em, too. Ther rest of 'em are sleepin' in ther back rooms."

"An' they ain't got no money?" queried Spotty, a look of disgust crossing his face.

"No; but they are putty well fixed with shooters an' ammunition, I guess. That'll be something, you know."

"Yep. That'll be something."

The man called Spotty had formerly been known as Spotted Bill.

He had been a lieutenant of a band of train robbers under the leadership of one Saffron Joe, and was a pronounced enemy of Young Wild West and his friends.

It was he who was organizing the band to put our hero out of the way.

A meeting was to be held that night at the Ram's Horn for the purpose of perfecting the organization.

Spotty said he wanted twenty men, including himself, who would take an oath in harmony for the purpose of getting rid of Young Wild West, Cheyenne Charlie, Jim Dart and Jack Robedee.

"It will be four of 'em against twenty of us," he said. "An' if we can't win ther game we never ought to try for anything ag'in."

The men who had been notified to attend the meeting came in one and two at a time, one of the last being Easy Edward.

Bowery Bill introduced him to Spotty as a man who had a grudge against Young Wild West, and who was very anxious to pay it.

"What's your handle, pard?" queried the outlaw leader.

"Easy Edward," was the reply.

"Which means that you take things easy, I s'pose?"

"Well, I should reckon you are right."

"Well, I'm a putty good judge of people, an' I rather think you'll do. Bowery, you had better hustle these cowboys out of here; they're wakin' up now, an' we don't want 'em to disturb us while we are holding our meeting."

"All right. Come in with ther gang an' we'll soon make 'em vamoose."

They did do this a minute later.

The men who had been sleeping off the drug were still dazed, but when they heard the order for them to get out and saw a dozen drawn revolvers, they obeyed as quickly as they could.

They went out and mounted their horses and rode away without missing their leader at all.

"That was easy enough," remarked Easy Edward, who was anxious to know what had become of the other man.

He found out a little later without asking the question, for Bowery Bill started in to relate what had taken place that afternoon to a newcomer.

"So he's in ther cellar, dead, is he?" thought the miner. "Well, I jest want to remember that. It may be that they'll hear him talk to 'em afore this meetin' is over. My! but I guess it is a lucky thing for Young Wild West that I come over here to-day! Why, I kin find out jest what this gang

intends to do, an' then go over an' tell him all about it when I git ther chance."

It was about nine o'clock when the meeting was called to order in a large room upstairs over the bar.

Spotty was in high spirits, since Easy Edward made the twentieth man.

"There don't want to be more than twenty of us," he observed. "I have always found twenty to be a lucky number. Not long ago I belonged to a gang what had twenty-four in it, an' me an' two or three more what's here, are all that's left. We managed to git away jest as they was goin' to hang us over in Spondulicks. We was lucky enough to find ther bodies of a couple of us what was shot when we got back in ther mountain, an' on them we found false whiskers an' sich. So we took 'em, an' we've been goin' disguised ever since. It was Young Wild West an' his pards what caused our downfall, an' we swore that we'd never rest till we had laid them four fellers low."

A hoarse murmur of approval went up from the men, Easy Edward joining in it, as a matter of course.

The meeting was then called to order, the purpose stated, and then the men were called up to repeat the oath that Spotted Bill, alias Spotty, recited.

As the men all did this at one time, Easy Edward had no trouble in omitting to say the words that bound him to them.

But he felt that even if he did say them he would not be bound by the oath, since he had joined the band for the purpose of breaking it up, and thus confer a blessing to honest people.

"Now, then, let it be understood that the sole purpose of this organization is to kill Young Wild West an' his three pards," observed Spotty, after he had been elected captain of the twenty men. "We mustn't try any robbin' schemes, 'cept on a small scale, till them fellers are out of ther way. I know by experience, an' so does Bowery Bill, that if it was not for Young Wild West things would be wide open in this town, an' we could run things as we pleased. It would be ther same way on all ther roads leadin' out of this town, an' we could git a whack at ther railroad, too, once in a while."

"That's jest as true as that we are here!" exclaimed Bowery Bill.

"Of course it is," chimed in some one else.

Before the meeting was adjourned Spotty appointed a committee to hang around and find out when Young Wild West and his three partners were going out of town again.

He said that it would be best to finish them all at the same time, as if one of them was shot or stabbed alone they might not get a chance at the rest for a long time.

Easy Edward took this all in and laughed in his sleeve.

He had an idea of practising a little of his ventriloquism on the villains he was duping so neatly, but thought he had better wait, as some of them might find him out.

So when he left the meeting room he walked out as one of the committee to watch Young Wild West and his three pards, and learn when they were going out of town together.

CHAPTER V.

OUR FRIENDS TAKE A HOLIDAY.

"Do you know," said Young Wild West, after the lawyer had taken his departure, "do you know that I feel as though we ought to take a holiday to-morrow on the strength of our selling the railroad? What do you say if the four of us take a trip over to Devil Creek and see how things are going over there?"

His remarks were addressed to Jim Dart, Cheyenne Charlie and Jack Robedec.

The four were seated in the rear office of the company, which was used only by the officers as a sort of lounging place.

"You couldn't make a better suggestion if you tried ever so hard, Wild," Jim retorted. "I would like to see Lively Rick and his wife, and also the young man named Mart Maxwell, who one time promised you that he was going to turn over a new leaf and do the right thing by his parents."

"An' Wild could pay his compliments to the mayor's wife, who was ther only gal Arietta ever got jealous of," spoke up Jack with a grin.

"Oh, we could have a good time, you kin bet," added Cheyenne Charlie. "I say go, by all means."

"Well, seeing that it is agreeable to you all, we will start the first thing to-morrow morning. Bub Sprague is over there

with his show, and we can always have more or less fun when we are in his society. The thing will now be whether the women folks will agree to our going or not."

"I kin fix it all right, as far as I am concerned," said the scout.

"An' so kin I," chimed in Robedec.

"It is all right with you fellows," observed Jim. "You are married, and we are not."

"And that makes considerable difference," Wild remarked.

"It hadn't ought to, though," and Charlie spoke in a thoughtful tone. "Why should a feller's gal keep him from goin' where he wanted to? She ain't got a claim on him, like a wife has."

"No; she hasn't got the claim," replied our hero, "but can coax better than a wife can, it seems. I'll bet if Anna was to tell Charlie he couldn't go with us over to Devil Creek to-morrow, he would go, anyhow; and if Eloise should put her foot down and tell Jim not to go, he would stay home."

"I don't think you will have a chance to prove anything like that," Charlie answered. "My wife has her own way pretty much in everything, but when she finds that I am determined to do a thing, she always gives in to me. That's ther kind of a woman to have for a better half, an' I'm proud of Anna."

"As to me," spoke up Jim, who felt that he must say something in reply to Wild's shot at him, "I am dead certain that Eloise would not try to stop me from doing a thing I wanted to do real bad. But if she did, it would not be as Wild just said; for I would have my own way about it, no matter what happened."

"Pretty headstrong, aren't you?" laughed the prince of the saddle. "But let us hope that there will be no great opposition to our going off for a holiday to-morrow. We will set right to work and get ready for the trip."

That night our hero went over to the post-office to escort his pretty sweetheart home, as he usually did when she was detained at her work as postmistress.

"Et," said he, as they walked along toward the Murdock residence, "we are going off for a holiday to-morrow to celebrate the sale of the railroad."

"We?" she asked. "Who do you mean by we?"

"Why, Charlie and Jim and Jack, of course."

"Oh, I thought you meant you and I," and her lips went into a pout at once.

"No, I didn't mean you, little one. It is going to be what they call a stag party. We are going over to Devil Creek and take dinner with Lively Rick and his wife, Nevada Kate."

"That's nice, too. Don't you suppose us girls would enjoy taking dinner with them, too? I thought you said it was going to be a stag party?"

"Well, it is. We can't take dinner with Rick without his wife is present, can we? If you insist on it, however, we will go to the hotel."

"Or you might dine with Mayor Jenks and his wife," said the girl, looking at him archly.

"You are thinking of the girl you got jealous of, Et. I really think you are still of the opinion that I was in love with her when I rescued her from the Sioux. As if I could ever love any one but you!"

If it had not been so public, the chances are that the handsome young fellow would have kissed her right then and there, but, as it was, his words had the effect to soothe her and make her give her consent to his going.

The conversation drifted in another channel after that, and when Jim met him as they were starting for home that night he found that he had been just as successful.

Eloise had not raised any great objection to his going, Jim said, though she had, like Arietta, asked why the girls could not be included in the trip to Devil Creek.

The following morning the four rode out of town a few minutes past six o'clock.

They wanted to get over to the Creek as soon as possible, so they could put in a good day.

Wild had seen nothing of Easy Edward since he left him at Brown's Gazoo the day before.

He was wondering how he made out with Bowery Bill, for he thought he must have gone over by that time.

With the town of Weston out of sight the way was lonely, and the scenery wild in the extreme.

The trail that had been made from one town to the other had developed into a regular roadway now, as the stage-coach made a trip each day, and there were other teams and horses going over it almost daily.

When they reached the mouth of the long cut, which was

called Gauntlet Gulch, the scenery became wilder than ever. But our four friends paid little attention to this.

They were used to wild scenery, not to say a wild life.

They did not come to a halt until they got through the gulch, and then it was to give their horses a drink.

Then they rode on again, taking it comparatively easy.

In just two hours from the time they set out they came in sight of Devil Creek, which lay below them in a little valley that had a stream running through its center.

It had been three or four months since either of them had been there, and they could see that the little town had built up considerably.

There were now two stores there, a blacksmith shop, and three so-called hotels.

Many shanties and some pretty fair-looking houses were scattered about irregularly, and all around them men could be seen working on their claims.

The best claims were located on the banks of the creek, but there were many good-paying ones as far as a mile from it.

"This is the town you boomed in such a short time, Wild," said Jim. "You had no idea at the time it would ever be as big and thriving as this, did you?"

"Well, to tell the truth, I didn't," was the reply. "But I felt certain that it would pan out all right."

Instead of riding direct to the center of the town they went over to the claim owned by their friend, Lively Rick.

Rick was there, working like a beaver, and he promptly dropped the pan he was washing pay dirt with when he saw them approaching.

"Here comes Young Wild West!" he called out at the top of his voice, and then about a dozen miners who were friends of our hero also quit work.

Wild was a great favorite with the pioneer residents of the Creek.

They gave him the credit of making it what it was.

Lively Rick was the first to reach them when they halted, and he gave them each a hearty handshake.

The others were anxious to shake hands, too, so they were given the opportunity and promptly availed themselves of it.

Among the men was Mart Maxwell, a young fellow who had been pretty well on the road to ruin, and who had promised Wild that he would turn over a new leaf.

Our hero was more than glad to shake hands with him, for he could tell by the general appearance of Maxwell that he was keeping his promise.

His eye was clear and bright, and his every appearance was that of a young man who was leading a temperate life.

"I am doing nicely," he said, in reply to Wild's question as to how he was getting on. "We are all doing well, in fact. When you came over here to boom a new town you did a whole lot for me. I gave you a promise then, and I have kept it. At first it was hard to steer clear of the bad men I had been in the habit of associating with, and I had more than one fight with them over it. I killed one man to keep from being killed myself. He had sworn to shoot me on sight, and it was his life or mine. There are a few of the same men in town yet, but they respect me pretty well now."

"What Mart tells you is straight," spoke up Lively Rick. "He don't touch a drop of liquor an' sticks right to business."

"Well, I am not like you. If I was to take one drink of whisky I would be lost. I would keep right at it every day, and would only work enough to get the money to pay for the stuff I drank. I know my failing, and I am profiting by the knowledge of it."

"Well, what did you fellers come over here to ther Creek for, anyway?" remarked Rick, after a rather lengthy pause. "I guess you must have heard that we are going to have roasted young pig for dinner, along with ther fixin's."

"We didn't hear it," retorted Jack. "But I'm right glad you're goin' to have it. Young pig with all ther fixin's is good enough for any one."

"Well, I should say so!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie.

"I don't suppose your wife thought she was going to have company for dinner?" observed Wild.

"Oh, yes, she did. Joe Jenks, ther mayor, an' his wife are goin' to eat with us to-day. Joe an' me is putty friendly, you see, an' we pay each other visits about twice a month. Ther pig is a good-sized one, and Kate was wonderin' how we were goin' to eat it all up; so now you fellers will come in handy, an' when she sees you her mind will be relieved."

Our friends laughed at this, and then rode over to see what was going on around the public places.

They noticed a good-sized tent at the outskirts, and Rick told them that Bub Sprague's show was holding forth there.

He was an actor our friends knew very well.

"You see," said Rick, as he walked along. "there wasn't a hall or place big enough in town to give ther show, so Bub got that tent sent over from Spondulicks, an' he now has lots of room. He about fills ther tent every night, too."

"He has got a great show, ain't he?" remarked Cheyenne Charlie.

"Immense! I've been to see it twice. My wife is just stuck on ther piece they play after ther singing an' dancin' an' sich like is over. Bub are a real genius, I kin tell yer!"

"Great Scott! Look there!" exclaimed Jim Dart, suddenly.

He pointed up the single street that ran through the town, and turning in the direction indicated, his companions saw an interesting sight.

A tall, slim man and a rousing, big, fat woman were approaching on horseback. The man was holding the woman in the saddle, and he certainly had all he could do to keep her there.

Young Wild West broke into a laugh at the sight, for the couple were no other than Bub Sprague and his wife.

The wealthy woman Bub had married was worth a small fortune—not in size or weight, but in gold.

Consequently the vaudeville artist humored her to every desire.

She had expressed a longing to be able to ride, and our friends had arrived at the Creek in time to see her first lesson.

"Hold tight, Mrs. Sprague!" called out Jack. "You are doing nobly."

The fat lady moved her head to see who it was calling to her, and that caused her to lose her balance.

Like a ton of coal she slid to the ground, taking her husband with her.

Then our friends had a good laugh, for it was too comical a scene for them to contain themselves.

But they hastened to lend what assistance they could.

Fortunately neither of them was hurt, beyond a good shaking up, and when the lady was helped to her feet she declared that she had had her first and last lesson at riding horseback.

She shook hands with the four who had come over from Weston, and was real glad to see them, after she had given her husband a piece of her mind.

Bub was grinning from ear to ear.

"She would have it," he said. "I tell you, boys, there's nothing like pleasing the women folks."

"That's right," answered Wild.

Then the showman insisted that they all go to the hotel he was stopping at and have a cigar, or something else, he did not care what.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TWENTY MEN ARE READY FOR BUSINESS.

Easy Edward had what he called "a time" before he turned in at the Gazoo that night after leaving the den kept by Bowery Bill.

He did not feel very good in the morning when he awoke, so he remained in bed until after eight.

When he did get up and go down to breakfast he was just in time to sit down with Brown, the proprietor.

"I lubricated a little too much last night," he said, apologetically, "an' I'm a little late this morning for breakfast."

"That's all right," replied Brown. "We serve breakfast from six to nine at this here hotel, so, you see, you ain't late, after all. This is about ther time I eat every mornin', 'cept Sunday, an' then I generally git up around half-past nine or ten."

"Well, my head seems rather swelled this mornin'. an' I ain't got no appetite to brag on. I filled in with too much rusty nails and vinegar yesterday, but I guess I'll feel better when I git a cup of coffee into me."

"That's right. Do you know one thing? As long as I have been in the hotel business, I have never allowed myself to drink too much. I stop as soon as I begin to feel what I have drunk."

"That's jest when I feel like keepin' on. Can't help it, though. I'm a rip-roarer an' a scorcher from Scorchville, an' what won't go easy has to go hard."

Brown laughed at this remark, and proceeded to eat his breakfast, while his guest simply contented himself with sipping his coffee.

"I guess I'll take a walk over to ther office of ther Wild West Minin' and Improvement Company," remarked Easy Edward, as he gave up the job of trying to eat his breakfast. "I want to see Young Wild West."

"Well, you won't see him to-day, I reckon. My man John told me a few minutes ago that Wild had gone over to Devil Creek. Cheyenne Charlie, Robedee an' Jim Dart went with him."

"Is that so? Well, I did want to see him on business afore he went anywheres."

The miner was thinking of the committee he had been appointed on the evening before.

Here was a chance for him to report that the four they wanted to lay low had gone over to Devil Creek, and all the twenty had to do was to lay for them when they came back and do their fiendish work.

He felt uneasy, however, and blamed himself for not getting up in time to warn Young Wild West of what was in the wind.

It was more than probable that some of the villains had already heard about the departure of the four, as there were some of them bound to be up at the time.

He thought he had better go up to the Ram's Horn and find out.

So a few minutes later he left Brown's and walked over to the post-office for an excuse to get away.

From there he went over to the Ram's Horn direct.

Bowery Bill had just got up, and was talking very earnestly to two of the members of the gang of twenty when Easy Edward walked in.

"Good-mornin', gents," said the miner, who was playing a double game in the interest of Young Wild West and his pard. "What's new?"

"There's somethin' new. Mebbe you know it, though," replied the landlord, with a knowing glance at his companions.

"No. What is it? I just got up a few minutes ago, an' I feel putty bad. I'm a rip-roarer an' a scorcher, but ther pizen I drank yesterday makes me feel blue this mornin'."

"Well, have a good drink, an' then you'll feel better."

"Nope. I ain't goin' to touch anything for a while. What's ther news you was speakin' of?"

"The four we are after are playin' right into our hands, it seems, for they have gone over to ther Creek. Bill here says he heard it over to the post-office that they are takin' a holiday 'cause they sold the railroad yesterday for a million dollars."

"Well, I can't see what they went over to Devil Creek to spend a holiday for," and our friend scratched his head as though he thought that would be the last place on earth to have any fun.

"Well, that's where they have gone, just ther same. Word has been sent to Spotty, an' no doubt you'll git word to go over toward the Creek an' meet them afore many hours. I s'pose you'll lay for 'em till they come back an' then pick 'em off, or somethin'."

"That'll be ther way to do it." Easy Edward replied, while he was thinking hard all the time of some way to warn our hero and his three friends of the danger that threatened them.

He soon came to the conclusion that he had better make for Devil Creek and inform them of just what was in the wind, so after a few minutes' further conversation, he said:

"I guess I'll git my horse an' ride out of town toward ther Creek. I'll wait on ther road till ther gang catches up to me."

"All right. I'll tell 'em."

Easy Edward lost no time in getting over to the Gazoo.

He saddled his horse in a hurried manner, and then mounting, rode off with the speed of the wind.

He had just got well out of town, and was riding along where the road was lined on either side by stunted trees and bushes, when a horseman suddenly shot out from cover and halted in front of him.

The miner reined in his horse instantly, and his heart sank.

The horseman was no other than Spotty.

Word had reached him over an hour before, and with half a dozen of his men he had ridden to the spot where he now was.

Then he had dispatched two of the men to notify the balance of the twenty that the time had arrived for the killing of Young Wild West.

Easy Edward had overslept himself and thus had lost all chances of warning the young prince of the saddle.

He dared not make an excuse to ride on to Devil Creek now.

But though he was worried over the situation, he did not become discouraged.

He would figure on a way to save the four yet.

"I thought I would be ther first one here, cap," he remarked, as his horse came to a halt. "But I see that you got ahead of me."

"Yes; I'm generally putty wide awake. I don't let no grass grow under my feet—not when such important business as this is on hand."

"That's right. What do you propose to do—stay around here all day?"

"No; we will go on to ther gulch an' go into camp in one of ther hidin' places there, an' then wait for our victims to come back. We'll stay right there till they show up, if it takes a week. Young Wild West has got to die, an' so has his three pards."

The miner, who was practising his deception in such a successful way, followed Spotty back into the undergrowth, where he found the rest of the gang who had come with the captain assembled.

"It won't be long before they all git here," said Spotty. "What time is it, anyhow?"

"Ten minutes after ten," answered Easy, looking at his watch.

"It's early yet. Say! that watch of yours reminds me of somethin' that happened to a couple of friends of mine not many weeks ago. Do you want me to tell you ther story?"

"Sartin! Go right ahead, if it is a true story."

"Oh, it's true, all right," retorted Spotty.

"Well, fire away, then. Let us hear your watch story."

"You see, we was hangin' out in a cave, a lot of us, about half-way between Weston and Spondulicks. One night ther captain, whose name was Saffron Joe, an' a man named Anderson, took it in their heads to go out an' try an' find somebody to hold up an' rob. Anderson, he had a fine gold watch, you know, an' Saffron Joe wanted one ther worst way.

"Anderson had said that mebbe they could strike a traveler what had a watch; so out they goes, without sayin' a word to any one as to what they was goin' to do.

"When they got upon ther road they was talkin' about watches all ther time. Joe had become watch crazy, it seemed, an' Anderson was tellin' all sorts of things about watches, sich as how men had been saved from bein' killed by havin' watches in their pockets, an' gittin' bullets in 'em, instead of ther hearts.

"I allus carries my watch in my left waistcoat pocket," says Anderson, as they were riding along in ther dark. "If a feller was to shoot straight at my heart ther bullet would fetch up ag'in my watch an' save my life."

"Jest as he said this a voice right alongside of him said: 'What time is it by your watch?' Then Joe an' Anderson found that they had been held up by two of ther cleverest highwaymen that ever rode over a mountain trail. Ther two strangers had ther drop on them, an' while they took all they had, includin' Anderson's watch, they joked with them an' laughed like anything."

"That's a pretty good story," laughed Easy Edward. "Did they ever hear from ther two highwaymen after that?"

"Oh, yes. You see, Joe an' Anderson felt awful ashamed of themselves for bein' taken in so easily, so they made up their minds to git square on the fellers. They made believe ride away, but came back an' followed the two sharp ones to their camp.

"Then they got ther drop on them an' got their things back. They was friends after that till they robbed ther train one night an' carted a whole box full of gold to their cave. Then they got into some sort of an argument, an' Saffron Joe got shot. Ther two highwaymen got shot right after that by Young Wild West an' his gang, who came along to get ther stolen gold from us. Them four fellers jist captured ther whole lot of us as fine as you please, an' ther whole kit an' boodle was hanged 'cept me an' two or three more, all of which belong to our gang now. What do yer think of my story?"

"It's a good one," retorted Easy Edward. "It's as good as I ever heard in that line."

"An' every word of it is true."

One of the men who had escaped with Spotty was there, and he promptly bore the captain out by declaring that there was not one word wrong in the story.

It was rather a snug place where the villains were waiting, and though Easy Edward was rather uneasy, he could only sit down when he was invited to.

While Spotty and the rest engaged in a game of cards, he began to meditate.

"There is only one thing to do," he thought, after he had run a hundred things through his mind in the space of five minutes. "I'll have to trust to luck an' my ventriloquism to save Young Wild West an' his friends. I'll wait till ther time comes, an' then I'm sure I'll find a way."

At the end of an hour the men began to come in one and two at a time.

When noon came they were all there, including Bowery Bill, who had not wanted to come very bad.

There was plenty of the coward in Bowery, and he liked to stay around his place and play a double game.

But there was no getting out of taking a hand in the foul work they had planned to do.

It had been voted that when the time came to put Young Wild West and his three pardis out of the way the twenty should participate in the crime—no more, nor no less.

And now, when Spotty counted noses and found there was just twenty, all told, he was delighted beyond measure.

"It's bound to be a winnin' game this trip, boys. Here's twenty of us, an' all we've got agin us is four. It hadn't ought to be much of a fight, either."

"We ought to fix it so there won't be no fight at all," spoke up Bowery, who was thinking of Young Wild West's unerring aim.

"Well, mebbe we kin. If we can't, we've got to sail right into 'em an' finish 'em afore they git a chance to do any damage. We've sworn ourselves to do it, you know, an' we must do it."

"We'll do it easy enough," remarked Easy Edward, and then to himself he added:

"I mean that me an' Young Wild West an' his three pardis will do it."

Could the nineteen villains there have known his thoughts, Easy Edward would have been riddled with bullets in no time.

But he was deceiving them completely and had been from the very start.

His reckless desire for adventure had led him into the game, and he was going to pull out of it all right, or die in the attempt.

That was the sort of a man Easy Edward was.

He might have several faults, but he was brave and honest. Two very good qualities are they.

The men who had come last brought with them enough provisions to last two or three days.

They did not know how long they might have to wait for the return of the four they were going to slay.

None of them gave a thought as to what might happen should they succeed in accomplishing their purpose.

It never occurred to them that the friends of Young Wild West must certainly have seen them take the road to Devil Creek.

And if the brave young prince of the saddle was murdered they would be surely under suspicion.

They wanted to get rid of the four who had built the town and made it on a level that was slightly above that of any other Western town of its size.

Then they had an idea that they could run things as they pleased.

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE WAY HOME.

When Wild and his friends reached the hotel Bub Sprague's wife excused herself and went to another part of the house.

The fall from the horse had jarred her considerably, and it was most likely that she wanted to take a rest.

It was the best place in town that Bub's company was putting up at, but this was not saying a whole lot, as neither of the three "hotels" amounted to much, as far as style and cleanliness went.

But in that part of the country in those days they were considered all right.

"Let's have something!" called out Bub to the man behind the bar. "I'll take one of them sours I showed you how to make."

"All right," was the reply. "What will the other gents have?"

Wild took ginger-pop, which was a new drink in that town, and Charlie and Jim reckoned they would try something a little stronger.

Then Sprague began telling them how he was making out with his show.

"This ain't such a mighty big town," he observed, "but the people here know how to appreciate good talent, though. That play of mine takes like wild-fire."

"Let me see," spoke up Jack. "What's ther name of it—I've forgot?"

"The Gold King of the Bowery; or, The Pirate's Treasure," promptly retorted the playwright-actor-showman.

"That's it!"

"It certainly are ther greatest play I ever seen!" exclaimed Charlie.

This compliment made Bub feel generous, and he promptly ordered the cigars, and the best in the house, at that.

While the five stood there laughing and chatting three strangers came in.

They were all rough-looking fellows, and one of them appeared to be in an angry mood, as he was using very abusive language to the other two as he came in.

They did not resent it much till they got right up to the bar close to our friends.

Then they began talking back pretty lively.

"You jest let us alone, Bowser, or there'll be trouble," said one.

"Yes," spoke up the other. "We hain't done anything that you should call us names like this. Give us a drink, landlord. I've got ther money to pay for it!"

"I won't drink with yer!" retorted the ugly man. "You are no good—neither of you ain't! Put that in your pipe an' smoke it; an' if you want any more, jest say ther word."

At this one of the men drew his revolver.

It looked as though there was going to be trouble.

Then before our friends were aware of it, the ugly man sailed into the other two.

He knocked the revolver that had been drawn across the room and grappled with them like a grizzly might have done.

In an instant all was confusion in the room.

Suddenly Young Wild West felt a tug at his shirt-front.

With a lightning-like move he made a grab and caught a hand just as it was removing his watch from his pocket.

Then he realized what was up.

It was a put-up job for the three to come in the place and start an exciting time, so they could steal something.

Wild's watch and chain were of solid gold, and that alone would have made quite a good haul.

Our hero no sooner tumbled to their game than he gave the wrist of the pickpocket a twist that brought him upon the floor in a heap.

"Ouch!" he yelled. "Let go! You'll break my arm!"

But Wild showed no mercy. He hit the fellow a blow in the face with his clenched fist and sent him out at full length.

Then he grabbed the ugly man by the throat and forced him back over the bar.

"You sneak thieves!" he cried. "So you came in here to start a muss and then pick our pockets, did you?"

Spat!

The man got Wild's fist between the eyes with such force that he saw a thousand stars.

"They are sneak thieves, boys!" exclaimed Wild. "We will teach them a lesson."

But Jim Dart knocked the other fellow down before the words were fairly out of our hero's mouth.

He had caught him trying to get his hand in his pocket while Wild was attending to the first man.

Then the two boys sailed into the three men for fair, Jack and Charlie simply looking on, for they saw that they were not needed at all.

In just about three minutes the three pickpockets were the worst beaten men that Devil Creek had ever seen.

It was not until they groveled on the floor and fairly begged for mercy that Wild and Jim let up on them.

"Now, then, get on your feet!" said our hero.

They obeyed quickly enough.

"Make a beeline out of the door, and don't stop till you get out of town!"

It was really comical to see how fast the three men ran when they got outside.

One of them had left his revolver lying on the floor, and the drinks they had ordered were on the bar untouched.

"I'll pay for them," said Wild, as he nodded at the glasses. "That was a great scheme, and it might work in some places, but not here."

"Not when you are around it won't," said Bub Sprague.

Just then he felt for his watch, and a look of blank dismay crossed his face.

"Gosh!" he cried excitedly, "they got my watch, I guess."

Cheyenne Charlie burst into a laugh.

"Here it is," he said. "When Wiild hit the ugly man he flung it away from him and I caught it on the fly. It was lucky that I caught it, or it might have been smashed to pieces."

Bub was so glad to get his watch back that his face fairly beamed with joy.

He ordered up the cigars again and insisted on paying for the untouched drinks of the three rascals.

A few minutes later our friends left the place, promising

Sprague that they would be over to look at his tent before they left town.

Then they went over to the general store that was kept by Joe Jenks, the mayor of the town.

They found him and his wife as well.

They both greeted the four warmly.

"You are good for sore eyes," said the wife, looking at Wild. "I shall never forget the night you so nearly came to being burned at the stake."

"That was an exciting time, rather," was the reply.

"If you had not managed it the way you did I would not be here, the contented wife of the best man on earth," and as she said this she placed her hand on her husband's shoulder affectionately.

"She means that," whispered Jim to Charlie.

"Of course she does," was the answer. "She was dead in love with Wild once, but she's forgot that now."

"Did you come over jest by chance, or was you invited?" asked the mayor, when conversation began to lag.

"We came over by chance. We sold our railroad yesterday, and thought we'd come over here for a sort of holiday to celebrate the sale. We are going to have roast pig for dinner, though."

As Wild said this the mayor and his wife laughed heartily.

"So are we," he said.

Lively Rick, who had left them when they went into the hotel with Bub, to go and tell his wife there were more visitors for dinner, came in just then.

"Let's go over to ther house," he remarked.

"All right," answered the mayor. "I'll leave ther store in charge of the clerk, an' we'll go right away."

The modest residence of Rick was not far distant, and they soon got to it.

Nevada Kate was standing at the door when they came up.

She had the same dashing appearance that she had when Rick first met her and fell in love.

But she had made him an excellent wife.

She not only knew how to run a house, but she could hunt and bag game as good as any man.

And when it came to a little hard work in the way of helping her husband work his claim, she did not hesitate to put her shoulder to it.

Lively Rick had learned to be saving, and the couple were fast accumulating a small fortune.

It fell to the lot of Jack Robedee to tell all the news from Weston, and he did it in a way that just suited the Creek people.

Then the mayor told everything of note that had taken place since he had seen them last, and by the time that was over the dinner was ready.

The roast pig was done to a turn, and the "fixin's" were just immense.

Our friends declared that they had never enjoyed a meal better, and Nevada Kate was pleased.

About an hour after dinner the male members of the party took a stroll over to the tent where the show was held nightly.

Bub Sprague was there to greet them, and after showing them around, turned to Wild and said:

"Well, Wild, I have given my show a good trial, and I have come to the conclusion that it is bound to make a success, wherever it goes. From here we will go direct East, and travel from city to city. In about a year I reckon I'll have a big pile of money, so I won't have to draw on my wife's bank account every time I get short."

"You have decided to go East, then?" Wild asked.

"Oh, yes. We are already scheduled to appear at more than a dozen towns this side of Chicago. I do all that business by mail, you know."

"You will go as far as Chicago, then?"

"Oh, certainly, unless the show 'busts' before we get that far."

"Say, Bub, I want you to promise me one thing."

"Tell me what it is, and I'll promise."

"Well," said Wild, "if your show should happen to bust, as you say, on the road to Chicago, I want you to telegraph me at Weston."

"Ha, ha! Why, certainly I will. But don't you believe that we are going to bust up. My show is a money-maker, as sure as you live."

"I hope you will have the best of luck; you believe me when I say that, don't you?"

"Oh, I know you are sincere. Well, if it does happen that ther show goes up you'll be ther one I'll telegraph first. Look out I don't strike you for some money, too!" and Bub laughed at though he thought it all a great joke.

Our four friends lingered around Devil Creek till five o'clock, enjoying themselves greatly, because the place was a little new to them.

Then they bade their friends good-by and started for home.

About a mile out of Devil Creek they met the stage-coach coming over loaded with passengers.

The driver knew them very well, and he saluted them by giving a cheer for Young Wild West and his pards.

Those inside the vehicle took up the cry, and they were shouting when the vehicle was lost to sight around a bend in the road.

"Ther Creek are certainly growin'," said Charlie. "There is more than one tenderfoot in that stage load."

"It takes tenderfeet to make good citizens of Western towns," replied our hero. "We've got several of them in our town, and I find that they are all right. Look at Walter Jenkins and Rex Moore, for instance."

"Well, you couldn't find a better pair than they are. And they are dead game, too," spoke up Jim.

"But they ain't fond of roughing it too much," added Robedee.

"Well, you couldn't expect that of them. They were not brought up like we were, you know."

They rode on at a good clip, and soon the entrance to Gauntlet Gulch was reached.

About half-way through the gloomy place they were treated to a big surprise.

The loops of a dozen or more lariats suddenly settled down upon and around them, and as they tightened all four were jerked from their horses to the ground in a helpless condition.

Once more Young Wild West had been caught napping.

Though he made a mighty struggle to free himself, he could not do so, since there were three lariats drawn tightly about his neck and body.

His arms were drawn tightly to his sides, too, and some one was pulling the rope tighter and tighter all the while.

The next instant a band of men swooped down on them, and the steeds of our friends took fright and wheeled around in the direction they had just come from.

Away they went at a mad gallop, while their luckless owners were quickly disarmed and bound hand and foot by the villainous gang.

CHAPTER VIII.

EASY EDWARD'S PLAN.

After the twenty men had cooked a short dinner they lighted their pipes and cigars and then got ready to move.

"We'll go on to Gauntlet Gulch," said Spotty. "I think there's a good place to lay for 'em half-way through it."

"A fust-class place," spoke up one of the gang. "I kin show it to yer when we gits thar."

Easy Edward said nothing, though he was still doing a whole lot of thinking.

He was resolved that Young Wild West and his three partners should not be killed, and he had gone so far in the game now that he meant to prevent the murder, even if he lost his own life.

But he was one of the twenty who were pitted against the four.

He was quiet till the time came for him to break loose and show his hand.

Then something was likely to happen.

The band rode along the road regardless of whom they might meet.

They were so bent on carrying out their foul plan that they were reckless, as far as anything else went.

The only men they feared in Weston were the men they were now after.

The gulch was reached in due time, and half an hour after entering it they found the place where they wanted to lay in wait.

As Easy Edward looked around him an idea came to him at last.

"Say," he said to Spotty, "do you know, in my way of thinkin', that it would be a good idea to take ther four we are after alive. I see how it could be done without givin' 'em a chance to fire a shot."

"How?" queried the leader, who, in truth, dreaded a fight with Young Wild West.

"Don't you notice that there's a ledge on either side here?"

"Yes."

"Well, s'pose that about half of us lay up there with our lariats ready to drop over 'em as they come along? Couldn't we catch 'em without givin' 'em a chance to fire a shot?"

"Golly! I guess we could. That's a great idea of yours!"

"You're right," chimed in Bowery Bill, who was awful glad that there were prospects of it not coming to a fight.

There was not a man in the crowd who did not think the idea was a good one.

"After we ketch 'em we kin take our time about puttin' 'em out of ther world," said one. "We kin give 'em a little torture, same as ther Injuns does, if we should happen to feel like it."

This remark was received with great favor, as all hated Wild and his friends.

Barring Easy Edward, there was not a man among the twenty who was not a brute.

After a short talk on the subject, during which every one was given a chance to have his say, it was decided that Easy Edward's proposition should be acted upon, and after the victims were in their power they should be taken back in a cave near by and shot by a volley from all hands.

Then the bodies would be tossed into a fissure, and all traces of the murder would be obliterated.

It was one of the most atrocious plans ever laid out, but the prime mover of it was doing it so he could save the lives of his friends.

He knew that if a combined attack was made upon them by the band of villains from ambush, at least one or more of them was bound to fall.

And as he would be trying to help them, he would be liable to go, also.

"There's jest this about it," he argued to himself. "If they are taken alive I kin most surely fix it so's they'll git loose, an' then, when ther gang ain't expectin' it, Young Wild West will be likely to show 'em what he kin do when he puts himself to his best. Jove! I'll bet he'll make Rome howl when he once gits at ther miserable coyotes an' knows that he's fightin' for his life. If ther four of 'em don't lay out half ther crowd I ain't a good guesser. An' I reckon I'll drop a few myself. Let 'em go on an' lasso 'em; I'll fix ther rest."

He now became more at ease, and he joked with the rest of the men as though they were waiting to play a practical joke on some one.

Spotty appointed two men to go a mile further through the gulch, and from some good point of observation watch for the approach of their victims.

"You've got to be mighty patient in doing this," he said. "An' so has all of us got to be. It will be ther biggest thing what ever happened to us when we have got these fellers out of ther way; so we mustn't squeal if we have to wait around here for a week for 'em to come back."

"That's it," chimed in Bowery Bill, though he did not look as though he wanted to remain away from his place of business very long.

The two men went their way to attend to their assignment, and then the rest sat down and prepared to pass the time away.

But before they did, however, the fifteen lariats that happened to be in the party of twenty were made ready for use.

One of them was the property of Easy Edward, but he dared not refuse it.

"There!" exclaimed Spotty. "If fifteen lariats can't catch four men when they are ridin' along innocent-like, I'll begin to think that I'm a sinner. You all know how you are at slingin' ther lasso, so I'll call for volunteers in this business. I don't know how to throw one myself."

There were enough there who understood the art, however, and they were soon picked out.

Then card games started.

It was a long and tedious wait, especially for Easy Edward.

But shortly before six o'clock the two men who had been sent out came galloping back in post-haste.

"They are comin'!" was the cry.

"Yes; fellers git up on ther ledges there!" said Spotty. "Hurry up, now! As soon as you've got 'em, jump down an' help us tie 'em up!"

The men had just got in the positions they wanted to occupy when the sound of horses' hoofs were heard.

Like the destroying demons they were, the men laid low.

For such a varied lot, they did what was expected of them by their captain with the utmost coolness and precision.

As the four unsuspecting riders got beneath them, the rascals let the nooses drop around their bodies, pinioning their arms.

Like a pack of wolves the other villains sprang upon the helpless four.

It had been a case of twenty against four, and, for the time being, anyway, the larger number had won.

"Hooray!" yelled Spotty, who was so overjoyed at the easy victory that he could not contain himself. "My plan worked nicely, didn't it?"

"Your plan?" echoed Easy Edward, in a voice loud enough for the captives to hear.

"Yes, my plan!" was the retort, in a tone with considerable anger in it.

"Wasn't it me what proposed to do this?"

"You said something' about it, but I put it through, didn't I?"

Easy said no more, but he made up his mind that when the fun started he would take care of Spotty first of all.

He was the worst of the whole lot, anyway, if there really could be any worst, and as he acted in such an important way over the capture Easy became not a little nettled.

But he said no more just then, though his revolvers were loosened in their holsters and his knife ready to cut the bonds of the captives.

At a word from Spotty the four luckless ones were lifted up and carried back into a sort of glen that was well hidden from the road.

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE TWENTY.

As soon as Young Wild West realized that it was useless to struggle he remained perfectly passive.

It was the second time in his life that he had been lassoed from a ledge, so he did not lose his nerve.

As soon as the villains had deposited him on the ground with his pard, Cheyenne Charlie, he looked up at them and said:

"Well, we fell into your trap. What are you going to do with us?"

"You'll find out soon enough," retorted Spotty, with a grin on his evil countenance.

"It seems to me that I have met you before," Wild went on, speaking as calmly as though he was simply among a crowd of friends.

"I reckon yer have," was the reply. "You sorter got ther best of me when yer took us prisoners in ther cave after we'd stole the treasure from the train. I was one what didn't hang for doin' ther job, though. You see, I lived to git square on you, that's why they didn't hang me."

"Get square on me? Why, how are you going to do that?"

Spotty burst into a laugh, which was promptly joined in by the rest of the villains.

At that moment Wild caught sight of Easy Edward, who was standing a little to the left of him.

The miner winked his eye slightly and touched the butt of his revolver.

Then our hero was perfectly at ease.

It did not take him but a second to realize that Easy Edward meant to save them.

So he concluded to amuse the men a little.

"You fellows have certainly done a great thing in capturing Cheyenne Charlie, Jack Robedee, Jim Dart and myself," he observed. "You could not have performed the trick any nicer, and I give you credit for it. But now that you have got us hard and fast, what good will it do you? If you kill us, we certainly have enough friends in Weston to wipe out your gang in short order. You don't expect that you will not be found out, do you. There is Bowery Bill among you! He has always made out that he was a friend to us, but I knew he lied every time he said a word about it. Bowery Bill has been doing dirty work ever since he has been in Weston, but he has done the last he will ever do. Mark my words!" and Wild turned his gaze upon the villain. "You will never get back to Weston and run the Ram's Horn, which is as crooked as its name implies! You are doomed, for at last I have proof that you are just what I thought you were. You hear what I say, Bowery Bill?"

The hotel-keeper's face turned a deathly pale as these words sounded in his ears.

He stepped back beyond Wild's range of vision with a gasp of fear and alarm.

"Ha, ha!" sneered Spotty. "You ain't afraid, are you, Bill?"

There was no reply to this beyond a coarse laugh from several of the twenty.

"Laugh away!" exclaimed Jack Robedee. "There's only one chance for you fellers, though, an' that is to let us go on about our business, an' you get out of this part of ther country as quickly as your horses will take you."

"Oh, I guess we won't get out of this part of ther country very soon—at least I won't," spoke up Easy Edward, acting his part to perfection.

"That's right, pard!" came a voice from somewhere far above their heads. "You'll stay in this part of ther country as long as yer feel like it; but I won't say that much for ther rest!"

Easy Edward appeared to be very much alarmed, and he looked up and around along with the rest of the startled group.

"Who was that talkin'?" asked Spotty, his lips twitching convulsively.

"I don't know, cap. It sounded like ther voice of a feller I used to be a pard of, but he's dead this year or more, an' it can't be him."

"It is me, Ed. I'm dead an' buried, but it is my spirit talkin' to yer. You don't want to die, do yer, Ed?"

"No," cried Easy Edward in a loud tone of fright which was put on with such good effect that it seemed to be real.

"Then listen to what I say, pard. Ther more I talk to yer ther more I can understand where yer are an' who's around yer. Yer mustn't kill ther four fellers you've got there with yer, unless you give them a show. They are honest, pard, an' there's only four of 'em, while there's twenty of you. Untie 'em, and then give 'em their shooters. It will be four ag'in twenty, then, an' they will be ther ones to win. They won't harm you if you untie 'em!"

The villains stood as though they were transfixed when they heard this.

There was not one man among them who was not superstitious to a large degree, and this voice from the grave—which they certainly thought it was—was altogether too much for them.

A deathly silence followed for the space of a minute.

Then in a hushed voice, Easy Edward said:

"Boys, what am I goin' to do about it?"

"Cut Wild West loose an' let him go—cut 'em all loose!" almost screamed Bowery Bill, who was shaking as though he had the ague.

The ventriloquism Easy Edward was practising was as much of a puzzle to our friends as it was to their captors.

Wild thought it was some one hidden, who was a friend of the miner, who was doing the talking.

And the rest did not know whether to lay it to a spirit or some one hidden around the vicinity.

None of them thought about there being a ventriloquist in the party.

Of all the villains, Spotty was really the least alarmed.

His nature was a combination of brutality and daring.

When fear overtook him he became reckless with it.

That was how it was with him now.

"You shut up!" he cried, turning to Bowery Bill in a manner that was fierceness itself. "I want you to know that I'm runnin' things here. Young Wild West an' his gang has got ter die, an' that's all about it! If a spirit kin talk, it can't hurt yer; I know enough for that!"

There was not the least sign or word of approval of what he said, which showed that the men must have agreed with the hotel-keeper.

"You're boss, that's right," retorted Easy Edward. "I ain't goin' to cut 'em loose till you tell me to."

Bowery Bill cast a searching look around and his eyes finally lighted on the horses.

Then he began to edge toward them.

He had moved about six feet when Spotty saw what he was trying to do.

Without the least word of warning the scoundrel whipped out his revolver.

As the weapon spoke Bowery Bill threw up his hands and fell to the ground.

The prediction Young Wild West uttered but two or three minutes before had come true.

Bowery Bill would never get back to Weston to run the Rain's Horn Hotel.

The bullet from Spotty's revolver had entered his heart.

"Shoot ther man what done that, pard!"

Easy Edward's ventriloquial powers were again at work, the voice sounding right above the heads of the gang this time.

They had scarcely sounded on the ears of the men when

the miner raised his revolver and dropped Spotty as quickly and as surely as the hotel-keeper went.

Then, as quick as a flash, Easy Edward drew his knife and began to sever the bonds of the captives.

"I'm doin' as ther spirit of my pard says, boys," he observed.

Not one of them moved a muscle until all four were liberated.

Then, as Wild and his three partners sprang to their feet, the men made a move to seize them.

The killing of their leader had made them forget about the voice of the supposed spirit.

"Shoot every one as goes ag'in yer, pard!" came the words from above. "There's a dozen men runnin' from ther trail to help yer!"

Then a series of muffled shouts could be heard right near them.

That was too much for the villains, and they began to scatter like chaff.

Young Wild West made a grab for the revolver in the belt of the slain Spotty and began shooting right and left into the ranks of the men.

In the meantime Easy Edward had handed each of the other three a revolver, and they joined in.

About a dozen of the gang lived to reach their horses and mount them.

They got out on the road through the gulch in short order and went galloping over the road to Weston.

Young Wild West placed his fingers to his mouth and blew a shrill whistle.

He had been practising it for some time to call Spitfire, his faithful horse, and though he had not always been successful in making the steed obey, he tried it now.

The echoes of the whistle had scarcely died out when the sound of hoofbeats came to their ears from the direction of Devil Creek.

The next minute not only the sorrel put in an appearance, but the horses of Jim, Charlie and Jack, as well.

They had followed the intelligent creature when he answered his master's call.

There was little trouble in catching them, and then with their own weapons in their possession once more, the four started in pursuit of the fleeing outlaws, followed closely by Easy Edward.

"There's jest twelve of 'em," exclaimed the latter, as he urged his horse alongside the sorrel. "I make ther thirteenth that's left out of ther twenty. I knew jest what was goin' ter happen last night, but I couldn't seem to git up early enough this mornin' ter catch yer afore yer went away. It turned out all right, though."

"Yes, and we are thankful for what you did," Wild answered. "I never thought to thank you before. You surely saved our lives, as those men certainly meant to kill us."

"That's right," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie. "Easy Edward, you are ther right sort of a man, an' you kin bet that I'll never forgit you for ther good turn you jest done us."

Jim and Jack also hastened to thank the miner, and then Wild suddenly thought of something connected with their escape.

"Who was that talking to you, my friend?" he questioned.

"Oh!" with a laugh! "that was me!"

"You!"

"Yes. You see, I kin throw my voice around anywheres, an' I kin change it to almost any kind of tone."

"Ah, I see! You are a ventriloquist."

"Yes; that's what they call it."

Charlie and Jack looked at the man as though they doubted his words.

But they said nothing just then, as there was too much to do.

The dozen villains who had made their escape must be caught and punished.

"I'll give you a sample of what I kin do when this business is settled," said Easy Edward, as they galloped along.

"All right," retorted Young Wild West. "Forward a little faster. It is a lucky thing that they did not take our shooting irons with them. I am going to try my luck with my rifle pretty soon. When we reach the straight piece of road I am bound to get at least one shot."

One word to his horse, and he began to draw away from his companions.

Though they urged their steeds at a faster gait, they could not keep up with him.

"I know I can't ketch him!" exclaimed Easy Edward, turn-

ing to Charlie. "I tried that yesterday. I'm a rip-roarer an' a scorcher from Scorchville, but I can't ride with Young Wild West!"

Half a minute later our hero's rifle suddenly flew to his shoulder.

He held the bridle reins in his teeth while he took a quick aim and pressed the trigger.

Crack!

The spiteful report rang out, and one of the men left out of the twenty tumbled from the saddle.

The straight portion of the road had been reached now, and before the scoundrels could get out of the way he fired again.

Another one dropped.

The others managed to each get in a shot, and two of them took effect.

"Four!" said Easy Edward, solemnly. "There's only nine left out of the twenty, an' I'm one of 'em."

"An' you are liable to stay, I reckon," said Jack.

"Don't shoot any more," cried Wild, suddenly. "They have got a flag of truce flying and are slowing down."

This was true.

The eight villains must have thought it would only be a question of a short time before they would all be picked off by the unerring aim of Young Wild West and his friends, and so thought they had better surrender and run their chances.

They were a good two hundred yards ahead, too, but there was another straight piece of road ahead of them, and being in the narrow gulch, there was no chance for them to turn off.

In less than half a minute they were all lined up on the side of the road.

One of them had his left arm hanging limp at his side where he had been hit by a bullet.

"Hold up your hands!" cried Young Wild West in ringing tones. "My turn has come now!"

Every hand went up, save the one belonging to the fellow who had been wounded.

"You are a fine lot of ruffians, I must say," went on our hero, as he reined in his steed before them. "So you thought twenty of you would be good enough to do away with the four of us, did you. You can't always be sure of things in this world, can you?"

"You've got us all right, so there's no use in us sayin' anything," one of them answered. "We wasn't goin' to hurt you, though; we was jest goin' to give you a little scare."

"There! Don't go to telling lies when you are so near the grave. You meant to kill the four of us, and you know you did. Now, it is you fellows who will be killed, and not us. Don't think that we are going to do it now, though, for I never shot a man under a flag of truce in my life, no matter how bad I knew him to be."

"They deserve to be shot, though," spoke up Jack, as he reached the scene and brought his horse to a halt.

"Of course they do," answered Charlie. "I'm just itchin' to jail ther trigger on some of 'em."

"Well, don't do it," said Wild. "Say! what is the matter with giving these eight miserable sinners a show? I'll toss up a dollar to see whether we take them to Weston and turn them over to the jailer, or let them go."

Easy Edward shrugged his shoulders.

"I wouldn't if I was you," he said. "They meant you, an' I allow that ther best thing to do with 'em is to either shoot 'em right here or take 'em into Weston an' git a jedge an' jury to try 'em."

"Well, I'll put it to a vote among the five of us whether I will toss up a dollar to see whether we will let them go or take them in. All in favor of that say ay!"

Jim, Charlie and Jack responded in the affirmative, and the miner said no!

"I am sorry to go against your wishes in this case," our hero observed. "But I think there might be some good in them yet, and it won't hurt to give them a chance. It is only heads or tails, you know, and if it comes down tails, they go to jail; if it's heads, they go free, after solemnly promising that they will lead better lives in the future."

"I'm satisfied," nodded Easy Edward, "but I hope it comes down tails."

Wild took a silver dollar from his pocket and tossed it high in the air, while the faces of the villains grew hopeful.

"Heads!" cried Jack Robedee, as the coin struck the ground and rolled over.

A prolonged sigh of relief went up simultaneously from the eight interested men.

There was not one of them who did not cast a grateful look at the young prince of the saddle.

"You have won your freedom, men," said he, fixing his eyes upon them. "I don't know as it is necessary for me to say anything to you, or to preach a sermon, no matter how short it may be. Light out for the place you just left, and bury your dead as you find them. After that make tracks for some other part of the earth, and don't let me ever set eyes on you again. Now, then, go!"

Without a word the villains turned down the road, and knowing that they would see no more of them for a while, at least, Young Wild West gave the word to start for Weston.

They rode into town only about half an hour later than they calculated upon when they left Devil Creek.

"We will meet you over at the Ram's Horn in about an hour from now," our hero said to Easy Edward.

"All right," replied the miner. "I'll be there."

Wild and Jim rode direct to their stable, where they found the man who stood watch over it every night awaiting them.

He took charge of the horses, and then with a grin said:

"There's company in ther house."

"Who is it?" Jim asked.

"A lady."

"A lady!" exclaimed Wild.

"Yes; a colored lady, too. Ike's wife has come on from the East."

Ike was the darky who did the work around during the day, and helped the Chinese cook, whose name was Wing Wah, when he had nothing else to do.

"I didn't know Ike was married," Jim observed, smiling as he thought of the expression the darky must have had on his face when he saw his better half coming.

"Nor I, either," said Wild. "I did hear that he was trying to court a squaw over in Spondulicks. Well, we will go in and see what she looks like."

"She's black as the ace of spades!" and then the watchman of the stable grinned some more.

Our two friends had not reached the door when they heard sounds of a rumpus inside.

Then the shrill voice of Wing Wah rang out angrily:

"Me no wantee blackee woman; keepee you selfs!" they heard him say.

At that instant our hero opened the door.

A truly comical sight met their gaze.

CHAPTER X.

EASY EDWARD BUYS THE RAM'S HORN.

A buxom-colored lady attired in all the colors of the rainbow had Ike by the wool with one hand, and with the other she was clinging to the Chinaman's pigtail.

"Here; what's the row?" asked Young Wild West, doing his best to keep a straight face.

Jim Dart could not hold in, to save him, and he burst out laughing.

The faces of the Chinaman and darky were enough to make any one laugh, no matter how solemn they might have felt.

They were the pictures of despair.

As the boys entered the woman let go.

"What is the meaning of this?" again Wild demanded, this time affecting a tone of anger that both the servants thought was real.

"Ike tellee me he no wantee wiffee; say me takee, an' she pullee me by pigtail, allee samee had man!" replied Wing Wah.

"Dat ain't so, Massa Wild!" Ike declared. "Dis hyar woman, she done say she my wife, an' I neber seen her befoah, honest I didn't!"

"Ike Cooley, do yo' dare stan' befoah me an' say dat! Take dat, you lyin' runaway coon!"

She gave the darky a sudden thump in the pit of the stomach which sent him to the floor in a heap.

"Stop this!" commanded Wild, sternly. "Now, woman, tell your story, and make it short and to the point."

"Seuse me, sah. I'se a honest, hard workin' woman, I is. Dis hyah coon done run away from me in Sheecargo ober a year ago. He write a letter to a colored man, an' he done show it to me. Den I done save up money to come out hyah, an' when I gits hyah he says he don' know me. He a wiked man, boss, an' yo' done oughter discharge him."

Wild stepped over and took Ike by the collar, giving him a rather rough shaking.

"Now," said he, "I want you to tell me the truth about this. If you don't tell the truth I will shoot the heels off your boots! Is this woman your wife or not?"

"She my wife, Massa Wild," was the trembling reply. "She done make it so hot for me dat I run away, so I hab a little peace. I tell de truth, Marsa Wild."

"He am tellin' de truth now, boss!" exclaimed the woman. "Here am de marriage 'tificate."

Jim took the rather worn document she pulled from her pocket and saw that it was what she claimed it to be.

He was so full of laugh, however, that he could scarcely read it.

Finally he managed to calm himself, and turning to Wild, he remarked:

"The rule here in Weston is that all men who run away from their wives must be shot."

"Yes; that is true," was the reply.

"Ike has been a pretty fair sort of a fellow, though."

"But that shouldn't make any difference about the rules."

"Then both Ike and Wing Wah have got to be shot. Wing aided him."

"I can't see any other way out of it. But, see here! There is something in the rules about women, too."

"That's so. Any woman that carries a razor concealed about her person must be horsewhipped out of town."

"That is it, exactly. Now, Mrs. Cooley, please produce that razor you have got about you and place it on the table there!"

Neither Wild nor Jim knew that the colored woman had a razor, but their knowledge of the habits of her race made them think so.

Consequently, they were not the least bit surprised when she produced the article mentioned and deposited it on the table.

Ike and Wing Wah were twisting about uneasily, expecting that they were going to get shot.

"I'll tell you what we will do," said Wild, after a pause. "We will let this matter rest till to-morrow morning. Ike, you take your wife out and find some place for her to stay. I have no doubt that she will be taken care of over at the Murdock house, if she is a willing worker and can keep a civil tongue in her head. Take her over and see. And mind you! don't quarrel or even pass a cross word on the way. Wing Wah, you get us something to eat, and get a hustle on you!"

It was wonderful to see the change that came over the three of them.

Instead of looks of fear smiles predominated at once.

The colored couple left the house at once, and the cook flew to do his bidding.

Then Wild and Jim had a quiet laugh all to themselves.

The rather humorous incident was a fitting one to follow the dangerous one they had passed through but a short time before.

They finished a hearty meal and were just getting ready to go and keep their appointment with Easy Edward when Ike came back.

His breath smelled of alcohol, and both the boys were quick to notice it.

By not drinking the stuff themselves, they could smell it on another person's breath very easily.

"Where have you been, Ike?" Wild demanded.

"I done took Mrs. Cooley ober to de Murdock house," was the reply. "Dey say she kin stay dar so long as she like, if she want to make herself useful about de house."

"That's good. But where did you go after you came from the Murdock house—you haven't been there all this time?"

"Oh, I done stop in de Gazoo a minute."

"I thought so," spoke up Jim. "He has got a bottle in his pocket, I bet."

"Of course," nodded Wild. "Hand it over, Ike."

In a hesitating way the darky produced a bottle of liquor from his pocket.

"I thought so," said Jim.

"Did your wife give you the money to buy this with?" our hero asked

"Yes, sah," was the reply.

"You made up with her, then?"

"Yes, sah; she very good woman."

"Ald you don't want Wing Wah to take her now?"

"No, sah."

"But you are willing to let him take some of this stuff in the bottle?"

"Yes, sah."

"Haven't I told you never to bring whisky in this house?"

"Yes, sah."

"Then why did you do it?"

"I done forgit what you say, sah."

"Well, I'll take charge of this bottle. Now watch what I do with it."

Wild walked into the outside kitchen that was attached to the building for summer use and deposited the bottle in a pail of ashes.

Then he drew his revolver, and taking aim at the bottle, smashed it into a thousand pieces with a bullet.

"The ashes will drink that stuff, Ike," he observed. "Now, you mind your eye, or you may get something you don't like to-morrow morning."

"Yes, sah."

The darky was now thoroughly frightened, and it was safe to say that he would be on his best behavior, for a time, at least.

Young Wild West and Jim Dart now left the house.

The hour was pretty nearly up, and they figured that Easy Edward, as well as Cheyenne Charlie and Jack Robedee, would be at the Ram's Horn when they got there.

And they were, sure enough.

The three were seated at a table, smoking, when the boys entered.

Faro Fan, the widow of Bowery Bill, was behind the bar. She was not aware of the fact that her villainous husband was dead, though.

She seemed to be rather uneasy when Wild fixed his gaze upon her.

"What can I do for you, Mr. West?" she asked.

"We thought we would come over and take a look through your house, madam," was the calm reply.

The woman turned pale.

"Wha-what do you mean?" she gasped.

"Just what I said. I am afraid you have not been running things just right here—you and your husband, who always tried to make me believe he was a friend to me. Faro Fan, how many people have been murdered here since you became the wife of Bowery Bill?"

The question was asked in a startling way, and the woman staggered back as though she was going to faint.

The rascal who was employed to attend bar made a move to leave the place, but he found himself covered by a revolver in the hands of Cheyenne Charlie instantly.

"I'll take charge of you," said the scout, calmly.

"Faro Fan," said Wild, stepping up close to the bar, "I may as well tell you that the jig is up, as far as this so-called hotel being run as it has is concerned. Your husband is dead, and if you don't leave this place before to-morrow night, you will certainly go to jail."

The woman recovered her nerve after receiving the first surprise.

She now put on a bold front.

"I reckon this place belongs to me, if it is true that Bill is dead," she answered, her eyes flashing fire.

"All right, if you want to make a fight, go ahead. Jack, go out and hunt up a deputy sheriff."

Robedee immediately went out.

Then the manner of Faro Fan suddenly changed.

She realized that it was all up with her.

"Won't you give me a chance to sell out?" she asked.

"It would do you no good to sell out; we are going to condemn the building and it will be torn down. You might find a customer for your stock and the lumber, though."

"What's ther lowest you will take for the whole kit an' boodle?" Easy Edward asked suddenly.

"I'll take two thousand dollars, an' walk out with my clothes an' jewelry," was the reply. "That is, of course, if it is a fact that Bill is dead."

"Done! It is my place!" exclaimed the miner. "Bill is dead, an' so is Spotty an' all ther rest of 'em but eight, so you need not worry about that."

"Give me your money and I will sign over to you right away," said the woman, with a pale, set face.

"Draw up ther documents, Young Wild West," called out Easy Edward. "I don't suppose it makes any difference whether we have any writin' or not, though; but we'll go through ther form, jest so's I kin keep ther dockyments to look at when I go broke some time. It will be a case of a fool an' his money soon parted; but that ain't to be considered jest now."

Wild soon wrote out a receipt and the money was passed over.

Faro Fan walked out from behind the bar, looking at the fancy little gold watch she wore as she did so.

She had a little over an hour to catch the train, and she went upstairs to get her few belongings.

Easy Edward took his place behind the bar.

"Send out for every man in town to come in!" he cried. "I'm goin' to run this whisky mill for jest an hour by ther clock, an' then ther whole caboodle is goin' up in smoke! Step up an' call for what yer want! There ain't a cent to be charged for anything, at least from now till ther time ther Ram's Horn Hotel is no more. I'm a rip-roarer an' a scorcher from Scorchville, an' there's no man livin' who kin run a hotel like I kin! Everybody step up an' git yer pizen!"

Jack Robedee came in just then with the deputy sheriff.

Our hero promptly explained matters to that official, and with a nod of satisfaction he went to the bar and began to drink with the other thirsty mortals.

Then our friends proceeded to make a search through the house.

They found among other things the death-trap in the cellar, and they promptly had the bodies of the victims of the villainous hotel-keeper turned over to the charge of the undertaker.

There were panels that could be worked in a noiseless fashion to take in the unsuspecting victims, and there was a room upstairs that had padded walls and grated windows.

In short, it was a regular den for the purpose of murder, and when Young Wild West and his friends had made a thorough examination of it, they were agreed with Easy Edward that it should be burned.

"It will be a lesson for others who might come here with the same intentions as Bowery Bill," Wild said.

When they got out in the barroom they found it so full that they could scarcely get through.

There were those there who seldom drank anything at all, and those who were ready to fill up at every opportunity.

It had been spread broadcast through the town that Easy Edward, a man who had more money than brains, had bought out the Ram's Horn, and was giving all the stuff away.

The miner himself was having what might be called "a high old time," for he was drinking with almost every newcomer and doing a whole lot of his characteristic talking.

"Walk up, gents," he was saying when our hero got back into the room. "This is positively the first an' last chance you will have to git so much rum for nothin', 'thout you steal it. I am ther boss of ther Ram's Horn Hotel, an' I am runnin' it to ther ground as fast as I kin. Whoopee! Help yourselves, everybody! Ther man what gits left is a lame coyote!"

"That fellow is about one of the whitest I ever met," remarked our hero to Cheyenne Charlie as he elbowed his way through the crowd. "He don't value money, nor he don't think what his life is worth. He is a sort of a brag, but that is a failing that many a man far beneath him is addicted to."

"I know that," was the rejoinder. "We must look out for him, too, for if a row was to start now he'd be ther first one to be shot, most likely."

"There won't be any row start now; things are not running that way at all. I think we had better let Easy Edward have his way in what he is doing. As soon as all the liquor in the place is dished out or run away, as a good deal of it will be, the building will be set on fire, and then the whole thing will go up in smoke."

"That's right," spoke up Jim Dart, who was a pretty good judge of things.

"Of course it is, if Wild says so," added Jack Robedee.

The bartender of the place, whom Charlie had taken in charge, was finally called upon by Easy Edward to help him out in dealing out the stuff.

"Yon 'tend to business right, an' I'll use my influence with Young Wild West to give you a chance to have twenty minutes to git out of town after this is all through with," he said to him.

There was a joyous look on the face of the man when he heard this, as he had come over from Spondulicks to work for Bowery Bill, and had relatives there.

"Don't give any man two drinks in succession, unless every one else gits ther same," was the miner's instructions as he came out to mingle with those in the room.

Faro Fan showed up just then with two traveling bags loaded to the brim.

"Good-by, gentlemen!" she cried, as she swept to the door. "I am well satisfied at the way things have panned out."

"That means that she is gittin' away with a whole lot of dust," Charlie whispered in Wild's ear.

"Well, let her," was the reply. "I am sure we don't want any of her ill-gotten gains."

The crowd bade the woman a merry good-by as she went out, and then Easy Edward mounted a chair and held up his hand for silence.

As he was the man who was keeping "open house," each man felt it his duty to keep still.

"Boys, I want to give three cheers for Young Wild West!" he cried, waving his hat in the air. "He was on his mettle to-day, an' he won out when it was four ag'in twenty! Hooray!"

The cheers were given with a will, and the rafters fairly rang.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LAST OF THE RAM'S HORN HOTEL.

It seemed that nearly the entire population of Weston had gathered about the Ram's Horn Hotel.

It had flashed around that Easy Edward, a miner with more money than brains, had bought the building and the stock in it, and that as soon as he had given the stock away he was going to burn the building to the ground.

The people of Weston were not used to seeing big buildings like the hotel burn.

Weston had been very lucky as far as fires went, and as it contained less than a dozen buildings that were as large as the one Bowery Bill had put up, it made a big excitement when it became known that a fire was to take place.

As many men as could get there were inside.

They were packed in like sardines.

Young Wild West finally squeezed himself out, followed by Cheyenne Charlie and the rest as fast as they could work their way out.

Easy Edward came with them, shouting in his reckless way and inviting everybody to help themselves to what liquor there was inside.

Our friends had hardly got outside when they saw two horsemen riding toward the crowd.

They were strangers.

Both wore bushy beards, and their hair looked as though it had not come in contact with a comb for a month.

Wild sized them up carefully as they dismounted and stood looking at the excited miners and cowboys.

"There is something familiar about those fellows," Wild said to Jim. "Let's get up close to them and watch them."

"I can't say as I remember of ever seeing them before," was the reply. "They look as though they were scoundrels, though, I must say."

Our hero led the way to within a few feet of the new arrivals.

They appeared to be interested in what was going on.

"Givin' rum away, did you say?" exclaimed one of them. "Who's doin' all that?"

"Ther feller that bought ther place a little while ago," replied the miner who had answered the first question.

"Who did he buy it of?"

"Ther widow of Bowery Bill; they say he's dead, you know."

"Oh, that's how it is? Well," and he turned to his companion, "we might as well git a chance at some of ther stuff that's goin' for nothin'."

Just then Easy Edward came pushing his way through the crowd in search of Wild.

The two strangers almost ran into him, and as he caught sight of them he uttered a cry of surprise.

Then out came his revolver.

"I've seen them whiskers afore, I reckon!" he exclaimed; and then, with a quick movement, he seized the beard of the nearest man and gave a jerk on it.

It was false and came off, revealing the face of one of the eight who had been given a chance to quit that part of the country.

Easy Edward had scarcely removed the false beard when Wild had the other fellow covered.

"Ah!" the young prince of the saddle cried: "no wonder I thought there was something familiar about these fellows! So you were not satisfied with the chance I gave you? I really thought that you had all learned a lesson, and would start out for a new field and do better. But it seems that I was mistaken."

With that he relieved the man of his beard, which was a false one, also.

"We come back to git somethin' what belonged to us in ther hotel," the fellow faltered. "We didn't come back for nothin' bad; honest, we didn't."

The villain had his hands in his coat pockets, and as he

ceased speaking a muffled report rang out and Young Wild West staggered backward.

The wretch had fired from his pocket.

But the echo of the report had not died out when Cheyenne Charlie's revolver spoke, and the outlaw dropped to the ground.

Then Easy Edward fired, and the other one stepped out.

Jim Dart made a move to catch Young Wild West as he staggered back, thinking he had surely received his billet.

But what was his delight when Wild cried out:

"I'm all right. The bullet hit the buckle of my belt and glanced off. It gave me a sensation as though I was being hit by a fist, though. See, here is where the bullet hit."

The buckle, which was a silver one, was badly knocked out of shape; and had the shot struck the fraction of an inch to the top of it, Wild must have gone down with a fatal wound.

The utmost excitement prevailed for the next few minutes.

Young Wild West had been shot and killed!

Some one started this cry the instant he was seen to stagger backward.

Of course those right near him knew better when they heard him talk, but those at the outskirts of the crowd took up the cry, and some one ran over to the post-office with the startling news.

Pretty Arietta Murdock was behind the rail in the office, talking to Eloise Gardner, the pretty girl Jim Dart was engaged to, when the news reached her ears.

She sprang to her feet as though she had been stung by a serpent, her face turning as white as chalk.

Then, instead of fainting dead away, she picked up a revolver that was lying on the desk and hurried from the office, followed by Eloise.

Not a word did the girl utter, but with the speed of the wind she ran to where the crowd was gathered.

Just what was flitting through the mind of the girl then it would be hard to tell.

But it is safe to say that if the murderer still lived and could be pointed out to her, he would have been shot down by her hand before he had time to breathe a prayer.

The crowd of excited men were awed by the appearance of the girl, and they drew back to make way for her.

Like a whirlwind she dashed through till she reached the center, and then—

She fell fainting into the arms of her handsome young lover!

She had seen that he was alive, and that was enough.

Young Wild West carried the fainting form into the nearest house, where restoratives were promptly applied.

He sat at her side till she came to.

"What is the matter, little one?" he asked, soothingly. "I am all right. The buckle of my belt saved me."

"Oh," cried the girl, "I am so glad!"

"You thought I was done for, did you? Well, I am a long ways from being dead yet. Wake up, now! It was only a false alarm, and it was a shame that such a report should reach your ears. Et, I did not know that you thought so much of me! There! It is all right now!" and he imprinted a kiss on the face that was gradually assuming its natural color again.

Arietta was not like the majority of girls, as the reader knows.

She was brave and true.

But this had been the hardest thing she had ever been compelled to face.

Her young lover had been missing on more than one occasion, and it had been reported that he was dead; but to have the news brought to her that he was shot and killed only a few yards from where she was at the time, had proved too much for even her stout heart.

But, as Young Wild West told her, it was all right now.

She recovered as if by magic, and in a few minutes she was able to walk over to the post-office with her young hero at her side.

Jim and Eloise went with them, and Wild told just how it all happened.

"That is what he got for being good to the men," Jim observed, as they sat down in the post-office.

"The men did deceive me, I must confess," our hero said. "I really thought that it was the last I would ever see of them when they started in the direction of Devil Creek."

"I think the other six did go on, and that these fellows came across the wigs and false beards while looking over the effects of Spotty," spoke up Jim. "They must have been very bad, or they would never have risked anything like coming back here."

"They came for the sole purpose of giving me my medicine,

it seems. I was not looking for that fellow to shoot from his pocket."

"What happened to them?" asked Eloise, looking into Jim's face.

"Oh, Charlie attended to one, and Easy Edward, as he calls himself, dropped the other one."

Wild was now as good as ever, and as soon as he was sure that Arietta was all right, he arose and started for the door.

"Come on, Jim," said he. "We might as well see the finish of the Ram's Horn Hotel. The liquor must be all gone by this time, and Easy Edward will be applying the match shortly."

"All right; we will go over," was the reply.

The girls made no objections, knowing full well that their lovers knew what they were doing.

When our two friends got back to the crowd they saw a number of the men carrying out the demijohns and bottles that still contained liquors.

Easy Edward was superintending the job.

Bowery Bill had carried a larger stock than most people had given him credit for, and the other hotel-keepers were much surprised.

"That whisky ought to be burned with the building, but it would be useless to suggest it," observed Wild. "The most of the men like the stuff, and they would call it a shame to destroy it, I suppose."

"Sure they would. They must have their own way. It would not be fair for us to stop them, even if we could. We are not the only ones who have opinions, you know."

In a few minutes all the liquor was out of the place.

Then Easy Edward picked up a big can of coal oil, which he had set aside for the purpose, and went in, pouring it over the floors and where he could about the building.

"We are goin' to have a good blaze while we're about it!" he exclaimed. "I'm a rip-roarer an' a scorcher from Scorchville, an' I never do anything half!"

Then he ordered every one out of the building; but there was little need of this, since there was no more liquor in it, and the men knew it.

Scratching a match, he lighted the lamp and put the chimney on it, just as though he was going to replace it where he had taken it from.

It had been jarred out by the surging crowd in their efforts to get in the place, but as there had been plenty of light inside, this made no difference.

There were also a dozen or more torches planted in the ground around the front of the place, and these made the scene almost as light as day.

"Now, boys, are yer all ready?" called out the miner, as he started for the open door.

An affirmative shout went up from those who were not too busy over the bottles and demijohns.

"Here she goes, then!" and he hurled the lamp into the building.

It broke into a hundred pieces when it struck the floor, and the oil ignited instantly, and a big blaze went up.

In less than a minute the whole place was on fire, the black smoke from the burning oil pouring out in a dense cloud.

"It looks like a shame to see so much good lumber goin' to waste," observed Dove-Eye Dave to Brown, the proprietor of the Gazoo. "But ther place was a bad one, an' that's ther only way to git rid of it."

"That's right," was the reply.

Easy Edward enjoyed the sight immensely, according to his remarks.

"I'm gittin' more fun for my money than I thought I would," he cried. "It had to be spent, anyhow, so let her go! This is ther time I'm lettin' my pile go up in smoke. Oh, I'm a rip-roarer, an' no mistake!"

"He is certainly a curious character," said Wild. "Money is of little account to him."

"That's right," replied Jim. "He told me that he did not propose to work again till he had got rid of something like four thousand dollars. Two thousand of it is going now, and I don't suppose it will be very long before the rest goes."

"That will go for gambling and drinking. What a fool a man can make of himself!"

"There are lots of men like him, though. If there wasn't there wouldn't be so many saloons and gambling places."

"You have got that right, Jim. Say! do you know, I have been thinking a little since we came back from the post-office?"

"What have you been thinking about?" asked Jim.

"I've been thinking that the two who came over here to drop me left the other six back on the road somewhere to wait for them."

"That might be the case."

"What do you say if we ride over and see?"

"I am with you on that."

"Well, call Charlie and Jack. We can get along without seeing this blaze, I guess. If two of them could change their minds, the whole eight could."

CHAPTER XII,

CONCLUSION.

When Young Wild West said he had an idea that the rest of the villains were somewhere back on the road to Devil Creek waiting for the two to return, he was right.

The villains had really been honest when they said they would never show up in that section again if they were let go, but with such as they honesty was something that could not last long.

They had scarcely buried their dead comrades in shallow graves when they began to feel as though they ought to have revenge on those who had done the killing.

All their minds seemed to be running in this vein, but it fell to the lot of one who went by the name of Barney to first give vent to his feelings in words.

"Boys," said he, "there ain't any of you what likes Young Wild West any better 'cause he let us off so easy, is there?"

They promptly put themselves, to a man, on record by answering in the negative.

"Then what's ther matter with one of you agreein' to go back to Weston with me an' finishin' him?"

"How kin it be done?" one fellow asked, the rest remaining silent.

"Putty easy, I should think. Here's ther false hair an' sich that Spotty had. We'll fix ourselves up so no one won't know us, an' then we kin do it easy enough."

"I'll go with you! If I can't go back to Weston, where I've got a claim, I might as well die, anyway. An' if we kin git revenge by killin' Young Wild West, there'll be some satisfaction in dyin'."

"Put on them things," cried Barney. "We will go over to Weston an' go to ther Ram's Horn an' git some whisky to bring back to you fellers. Then we'll try an' git a crack at Young Wild West an' come back like a streak of greased lightnin'. We won't die afore we git back, either, I'm tellin' yer. If I ain't been your leader, I reckon I know a few things that Spotty didn't dream of."

These words brought great applause from the villains.

"We'll take ther two best horses in ther bunch, 'cause we may need 'em comin' back," said the fellow who had volunteered to go with Barney.

"That's it!" exclaimed the new leader. "Ther rest of yer kin ride along with us an' wait about a mile this side of the town for us."

It was now, after dark, as it had taken them some time to bury the dead, and they thought they could not get to Weston too soon.

When the villains left Gauntlet Gulch behind them they let the horses go at a swift pace and the ground was rapidly covered.

The villains rode on until they came to a little hill about a mile from the town.

Then they halted, and after a few more words on the subject of what they proposed to do, the two disguised ones rode off.

Then the six settled down to wait.

They chatted in low tones and kept on waiting.

Suddenly one of them pointed to the sky in the direction of Weston.

It was a lurid red.

"There's a fire over there," one of them said.

"Yes, and a big one, too," remarked another.

"I wonder what buildin' it kin be?"

Then they all looked at each other and shrugged their shoulders.

What building could it be but the Ram's Horn Hotel?

That was what flashed into the mind of each and every one of them.

"It's time they were back afore this," said the first one who had spoken.

"Yes. There! I hear 'em comin' now!"

The others listened and heard the sounds of approaching hoofs.

They were not coming at full speed, so they were hopeful that their two daring companions had been successful.

"We had better be ready to move, so we won't be behind if they're beln' chased."

The man who said this evidently had considerable forethought.

The rest acted on his advice and stood holding their horses by the bridles when the horsemen appeared.

But instead of two, they saw four.

But before they could get into the saddle the sharp command rang out:

"Stay where you are! Another move and you are dead men!"

The six villains recognized the voice.

It was Young Wild West who was talking to them.

They did as they were bid.

The next instant the four riders were right among them, going through them and taking their weapons away.

Wild, Charlie, Jim and Jack had found them waiting there, as our hero said he thought they would.

"You are a fine lot," he said. "After I gave you a chance to start life anew not three hours ago, you sent back two men to kill me, did you? Well, you need not expect any mercy now. You can take your choice of riding peaceably ahead of us, or getting filled with lead if you attempt to ride away. Which shall it be?"

"We'll go with you," answered one of them.

"All right. Mount!"

They did mount much quicker than might be supposed, and when they faced their horses toward the bright red sky they were the sickest lot Young Wild West had ever been in charge of.

Not one of them had a word of excuse to offer.

"Remember," cautioned Young Wild West, "the first man who attempts to run away dies. We have got our eyes open."

None of them attempted to run away, however, and when they entered Weston they were riding along as meek as lambs.

The town was illumined from one end to the other by the glare from the burning hotel, and it was not long before our friends and their prisoners were seen.

A number of Wild's warm friends and admirers crowded around them.

He thought he had better explain matters, so he did so.

He told them all that had taken place that afternoon and evening; how the twenty had plotted to kill him and his partners, and how Easy Edward had been instrumental in thwarting them.

When he came to the part where he had let the eight survivors go a cheer went up.

His hearers knew how generous he was.

But when he recited how the eight had come back to kill him there was a howl.

Then the crowd took charge of the six.

While they were hastily summoning a jury our four friends rode over to the burning building.

They knew what was in store for the villains.

They had had a good chance late in life, but they had thrown it away.

"The Ram's Horn will soon be a thing of the past," observed Young Wild West, as he looked at the falling blaze.

"Yes; another hour will lay it low," retorted Jim.

"An' a good thing, too," spoke up Charlie.

"There goes ther train that's takin' Faro Fan away!" exclaimed Jack, as the whistle of a locomotive sounded.

The four partners looked at each other and nodded.

Then they walked over to the post-office, where their wives and sweethearts were standing, watching the blaze.

About a month after the events just described Young Wild West received a telegram.

It came from Northfield, Minnesota, and read as follows:

"YOUNG WILD WEST, Weston, Dakota.

"Show busted!

BUB."

"I thought so," said our hero, as he turned it over to Jim Dart. "Such a show as Bub Sprague's was too good to be appreciated very far east of here."

"What is the next thing on the carpet?" asked Jim, after he had the laugh over the dispatch.

"I don't know."

But there was something new to happen pretty shortly, which will be reserved for the next number of the *WILD WEST WEEKLY*.

Next week's issue will contain "YOUNG WILD WEST'S RANCH; OR, THE RENEGADES OF RILEY'S RUN."

SEND POSTAL FOR OUR FREE CATALOGUE.

CURRENT NEWS

The run of 18 in the three-cushion carrom billiards made by Charles Morin, of Chicago, in a game against Frank Benson at St. Louis, May 21, will probably be accepted as the professional record and supplant the high run of 15 made by George W. Moore. It was made in a tournament in which the players competed for gate receipts.

It is reported from Osaka that a young Japanese millionaire in Hyogo prefecture has invented artificial coffee almost equal in every respect to natural Brazilian coffee. As the result of chemical analysis by experts, it is reported to have been found that the goods now manufactured by the young inventor are more wholesome than the natural, while retaining all the flavor and quality which make the drink ideal.

Government clerks under Secretary McAdoo of the Treasury Department must pay their debts or give up their positions. An order to that effect was issued by Acting Secretary Byron R. Newton. It reads: "The Treasury Department will not be made an agency for the collection of debts contracted by its employees. Employees will not be retained in its employ who, without specific cause, persistently refuse or habitually neglect to pay their necessary personal and family expenses."

The dust which fills the air in the subways of Paris has become a great nuisance, and scientists have lately been trying to find out just what it consists of. Their analyses show that the dust contains 46 per cent. of metallic iron, 1.10 per cent. of iron oxide, 12.1 per cent. of lime and plaster, 1.10 per cent. of grease and 12.6 per cent. of water and organic matter. The remaining 13.7 per cent. of its contents is made up of small quantities of a number of organic and inorganic substances.

The last two strongholds of "anti-motorists" have finally succumbed, and the automobile is now admitted into every nook and cranny of the United States. The last barriers to fall will be those of the Yellowstone National Park, which is scheduled to open for the motorists on August 1. On April 25 of this year Bar Harbor, Me., and Mt. Desert, opened their roads to the hated motor car. At the last session of the Legislature a bill was passed, admitting automobiles on the island, the popular summer resort on the Maine coast.

Just to prove that they could, twenty-five girls of the domestic department of the Baker High School, Baker, Ore., baked more than 1,000 doughnuts and gave them away to visitors recently. Eighteen girls rolled and cut and plunged circular pieces of dough into hot lard for three hours, while six served the hundreds that ate the doughnuts, praised them and asked for more. The feat was part of the annual school exhibit of the public schools, and the girls put on the "doughnut-day" feature at the domestic science rooms of the high school.

Eighteen months in Sing Sing is preferable to ten months in the penitentiary, James J. Jeffries, a negro porter, told Judge Mulqueen, of New York, in General Sessions when he came up for stealing a watch from Frederick Tait in the pen of the West Court. Judge Mulqueen pronounced sentence of a year in the penitentiary when Jeffries turned and said: "Please, judge, I'd rather go to Sing Sing." "But if you go to the penitentiary you may go out in ten months," Judge Mulqueen replied. "I should have to sentence you to eighteen months at least if you go to Sing Sing." "I have lots of friends in Sing Sing, though, judge, and they say they have ball games and moving pictures there. Please send me there." Judge Mulqueen smiled and changed the commitment.

In the course of digging a well shaft on his property near Ware, Mass., a farmer encountered quicksand at a depth of twenty-five feet beneath the surface of the ground, and sank in it until his head alone was visible, when his plight was finally discovered. Every possible agency was called upon to assist in the rescue work, the fire department included, but, despite this he was buried for more than twenty-four hours before he could be taken from his dangerous position. The reason for this was that in digging the shaft he had stood on a platform made of planking, and when the quicksand sank beneath his weight his feet were caught by the boards, making it necessary to uncover his entire body before he could be saved. This work at first sight was an easy task, was rendered difficult by the continual caving in of the shaft when the rescuers, clinging to a ladder, attempted to dig the man out. This plan had to be abandoned entirely, and to keep the victim alive, it was necessary to make an improvised helmet out of a barrel. Two tubes were sent down to him; through one he received air, and through the other nourishment.

The seven ancient wonders of the world were as follows: The pyramids of Egypt, the mausoleum of Artemisia, the temple of Diana of Ephesus, the hanging gardens of Babylon, the Colossus of Rhodes, the statue of Jupiter Olympus by Phidias, the Pharos or watch tower of Rhodes. The seven wonders of the Middle Ages were the Coliseum of Rome, the catacombs of Alexandria, the great wall of China, Stonehenge, the leaning tower of Pisa, the porcelain tower of Nankin, the mosque of St. Sophia at Constantinople. The natural wonders of America are given as Niagara Falls, Yellowstone Park, the Mammoth Cave, the canyons and Garden of the Gods, Colorado; the giant trees, California; the Natural Bridge, Virginia; the Yosemite Valley. The modern seven wonders of the world are, variously given as the art of printing, optical instruments, their discovery and invention, gunpowder, steam engine, photography, labor-saving machinery and the electric telegraph. They are also given as the Brooklyn Bridge, the Great Eastern, the Suez Canal, the Hoosac Tunnel, the Pacific railway, the submarine cables and the National Park.

The Fate of Philip Funk

—OR—

LEFT IN THE LAND OF FIRE

By "PAWNEE JACK"

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XXIII.

PHILIP FUNK MAKES HIS LAST THROW.

"Let it go!" cried Tom. "It is stolen money, anyhow, and there is a curse on every dollar of it. Up with the anchor, and away we go."

So far every move in Tom's bold plan had worked out to success.

The trouble came when they tackled the anchor.

For some unknown cause the flukes had become entangled among the rocks which filled the bottom of the shallow cove, and despite of all their efforts it would not move.

While they were working desperately at the windlass Susie gave a sudden cry, and directed their attention shoreward, and at the same instant the frightful yell of the Fuegian dwarfs rang out.

There they were, nearly a hundred of them.

They came dashing out of the treasure cave, swarming on the beach just vacated by the boys.

Some carried their light canoes on their backs; others were crowded together, carrying out the heavy boxes of treasure; others still were rolling the kegs of silver dollars down the beach.

"They see us! We are lost!" cried the steward. "Try it again! Try it again, boys! We must up anchor if we ever expect to escape from the land of fire alive!"

In spite of the steward's excited assertion that the dwarfs saw them on the deck of the Sutton, Tom felt sure that such was not the case, for the Fuegians seemed to be intent only with their own affairs.

"Down! Down to the deck, everybody!" he cried. "We can do nothing with the anchor, and the only thing for us to do is to wait until this blows over, or we understand what it all means. Meantime, let's lie low!"

"That's good advice," said George. "It's the only way. Somebody has got to go down and loosen that anchor before we can ever hope to get it up. I have seen anchors bite like that before. If we had any means of slipping the chain it would be different, but it would take half an hour to do that."

"It's de demon's work!" cried Jeff. "I belieb he is down dar holding it. Dis am de land ob witches! It has been bad work clean through from de fust."

Nobody paid any attention to Jeff's views, of course, although it's likely enough that George entertained them also.

All were flat on the deck now, and Tom crawled to the rail and cautiously looked off toward the shore.

He soon saw how the case stood.

Philip Funk was now among the dwarfs, directing their movements with many wild gestures and loud shouts.

Mad the man certainly was, but that there was much method in his madness was just as certainly true.

He had captured the ship, and brought her into the cove for the express purpose of carrying away the treasure.

What influence he had over the dwarfs to make them do his bidding it is hard to say, but they were doing it all right, and the treasure to the last dollar was being rapidly landed outside of the cave by the united efforts of dozens of dwarfs, while others were equally busy loading it into the canoes.

"They are going to bring it on board here," Tom said to George. "I think I can see through it all."

"Well?" asked George. "What's your idea?"

"Why, just that your Philip Funk isn't as crazy as he seems to be. He intends to come aboard here and escape with the treasure alone."

"If he thinks to run this ship alone he's mad, all right," said George. "I guess he's mad, fast enough, anyhow, and this business is only part of it. We can do nothing but hide ourselves. "Hello! They are starting now!"

It was so.

The fleet of canoes was getting on the move.

What struck George strangely was that Philip Funk evidently had no intention of coming out to the ship.

"Perhaps he has not got all the treasure," suggested Tom. "But it seems to me that they have loaded on about as much as we saw."

"There is nothing to do but to hide ourselves," said George, "and we don't want to delay about that, either."

Question was where to hide, and the decision fell upon the fo'castle, to which they all retired and bolted themselves in.

They had not long to wait before they heard the dwarfs come swarming upon the deck, throwing the heavy boxes and kegs about.

Tom was most curious to know how they managed to get them up, but to venture out would have been mere madness, and this was something he never learned.

After a time the sounds died away, and, peering through the dead-lights, they could see the canoes making back toward the beach.

Tom now ventured on deck, moving with great caution, which, however, proved to be quite unnecessary, for all the dwarfs had left the ship.

He passed the word to the others, and they came up, too, all keeping down low to avoid being seen from the shore.

The deck was strewn all over with the boxes and kegs.

Some had broken open, and the money lay scattered about everywhere. Many of the pieces had rolled up against the dead men. It was a strange sight—a mockery, so to speak.

From the yardarm the glassy eyes of Mate Topham seemed to look down upon the treasure he now never could possess.

Over on shore the dwarfs were landing. They drew their boats up on the beach, huddled themselves together for a few moments, and then, with one wild demon-like shout, they rushed as one man into the treasure cave.

"To the anchor again!" cried Tom. "The tide is rising. Perhaps we can raise it now!"

All hands threw themselves into the work with a will.

To their great joy the anchor moved, and a moment later came swinging up.

"Hooray!" shouted George. "We are off! The treasure is ours! We are rich for life!"

Tom drew back.

His face looked grave.

"George Meacham," he said solemnly, "I'm only a poor orphan boy; besides yourself I haven't a friend in the world. But I have always tried to be honest, and I propose to continue in the same road till I die. That money is not ours. I will never touch one penny of it, but I will do my best to return it to those to whom it rightfully belongs. Look around you! Look at the yardarms above you! Think of what happened to Don Jose Uriate, the thief; think of the fate of Philip Funk! To those who tried to make this stolen money their own nothing but bad luck has come. No, George! Not one dollar of it for me except in the way of reward from its rightful owners. Not one!"

"Good for you, boy!" cried the steward. "What you say is the truth!"

What George might have said in answer it is hard to tell, for at that moment all saw Philip Funk come running out of the cave, wildly waving his hands above his head.

Without the slightest hesitation he plunged into the water, and swam for the ship, which was now beginning to move out of the cove.

"For heaven's sake, don't let that madman board us," the steward cried.

The words were scarcely uttered when a thunderous explosion rang out, and a great section of the bluff seemed to crumble to pieces, vast masses of rock tumbling upon the beach.

Frightful yells and wild screams followed, and a few frightened looking dwarfs, all cut and bleeding, came crawling out among the rocks.

"The fiend! He's exploded the powder!" cried Tom. "He made the dwarfs carry the treasure aboard ship for him, and then blew them all to blazes for their pains! Who dares to call that man mad!"

The cause of all this destruction, meanwhile, was swimming vigorously toward the ship.

He had covered about half the distance when a dwarf, taller than the rest, came leaping down from the rocks.

Unslinging his bow, he fixed an arrow to it, let fly, and the shaft, skimming over the water, lodged in the neck of Philip Funk.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

"That man is a goner!" cried the steward. "Them arrows of the Fuegians are poisoned, as everybody knows."

"We must save him if we can!" said George. "He's an old shipmate of mine, anyhow. I never go back on a friend!"

The Sutton was now moving out of the cove.

The dwarfs—the few left of the great swarm which had gone into the cave—stood silently on the beach watching the swimmer, and making no effort to follow in their canoes.

Meanwhile Philip Funk made no movement to extract the arrow. He was swimming desperately, and with amazing speed.

"He is coming up with us!" cried George. "We must throw him a rope!"

They did so, and in a few moments the madman had hold of it, and pulled himself up on deck.

His whole appearance had changed. The wild look in his eyes seemed to have left him. Indeed, he acted like a blind man, and groped his way with his hands stretched before him.

"Pull it out, George!" he said in a hoarse whisper. "Poisoned arrow, boy! Pull it out!"

Then, before George could make a move to extract the arrow, he fell, face downward, upon the deck.

George immediately extracted the arrow. The flesh around the wound was already swelling, and no blood flowed.

"He's a goner," said the steward.

"Help me, Tom," said George, and they carried the man, into the captain's stateroom, laid him in the bunk, and for ten hours afterward he lay, just breathing, his neck swelled out to enormous size.

Meanwhile good work had been done aboard the Sutton. The decks were cleared, and the yardarms relieved of their horrid burdens.

George took the wheel, and steered the ship westward along the Straits.

Susie watched with the sufferer in the captain's stateroom, Jeff went back to his cooking, and the steward prepared a good dinner for all hands, while Tom, with pail and mop and broom, cleaned the decks and stored away the treasure in the cabin.

By morning they were far along through the Straits, and all going well, to the unspeakable relief of every one on board.

It was just after daylight that Susie called George and Tom to the captain's stateroom.

(To be continued)

ITEMS OF INTEREST

BIG MISSOURI PEONY FIELD.

Sarcoxie, a town of 1,500 on the eastern edge of Jasper county, Mo., long has been the leading strawberry shipping point in Missouri and its peony fields are said to be the largest in the world.

At present there are about sixty acres of plants in the Sarcoxie fields. This waving sea of big red, white and pink flowers is a beautiful sight and attracts thousands of visitors during the season, which is between May 5 and 25. The flowers are shipped to all parts of the country.

PLAN A NEW CANAL.

The next great waterway scheme to be carried out, according to present indications, is the Georgian Bay Canal, which is to connect Georgian Bay with the St. Lawrence River at the head of navigation for seagoing vessels near Montreal, says Popular Mechanics. This canal will not only give vessels from the Atlantic direct entrance to Lakes Huron, Michigan and Superior, but will reduce by nearly one-half the distance traveled by water-borne shipping in going from the northern part of Lake Huron to Montreal, eliminating the present indirect route by way of Detroit, Lake Erie, the Welland Canal and Lake Ontario. The canal will utilize for the greater part of its length a continuous chain of natural lakes and rivers. The total length is 449 miles, and over only 30 miles of this will it be necessary to construct a new waterway, although much of the existing waterways will require dredging. The total cost of the canal is estimated at less than \$150,000,000.

1794 CENT FETCHES \$245.

The collection of United States coins belonging to a prominent American, containing the most remarkable series of early coins, fifty-nine varieties of 1794 cents, over fifty varieties of 1796 cents, choice cents of 1793 and other dates, and a fine lot of gold coins, was put on sale recently by the United States Coin Company at 200 Fifth Avenue. Daniel R. Kennedy acted as auctioneer.

A half-cent of 1796, without pole, die cracked across obverse, fine for this rare date, brought \$120.

A cent of 1794, from the Gilbert collection, sold for \$40. An almost uncirculated cent of 1794 (Hays 3), also from the Gilbert collection, went for \$108. Another variety (Hays 9) realized \$64. An almost uncirculated example of the same coin (Hays 25) brought \$165, and an extremely fine specimen, also of 1794 (Hays 49), was knocked down for \$245. Other cents of 1794 (Hays 42) brought \$150 and (Hays 47) \$135. The Chapman variety of the 1794 cent sold for \$85.

The total was \$5,378.

ALASKA VOLCANO ACTIVE.

Iliamna volcano and an unidentified peak on the west coast of Cook inlet has been in eruption, according to reports brought by the steamer Alameda to Seward, Alaska,

Persons who passed the volcano said dense clouds of smoke were rolling up from the crater.

Four slight earthquakes, accompanied by a roaring noise, have been felt during the last three months, but are believed to have had no connection with the volcanoes, as no shock was felt here when the craters became active.

Iliamna volcano, on the west coast of Cook Inlet, is a peak 12,066 feet high. It has been known as an active volcano since the earliest records of the Spanish and American explorers, but its eruptions never have been violent. The district around Iliamna is virtually uninhabited.

There has been no violent outburst since June 9, 1912, when Mount Katmai burst into a spectacular eruption, covering fertile Kodiak Island and the adjacent mainland under a deep layer of volcanic ash.

Iliamna volcano is 150 miles west of Seward.

BOY INVENTOR HANGS HIMSELF.

Louis Kahnweiler, ten years old, only child of Louis M. Kahnweiler, a wealthy manufacturer of life-saving apparatus, at No. 260 Front Street, hanged himself the other evening while experimenting with a "hangman's noose" in his room in the family apartment in Ivy Court, No. 210 West 107th Street, New York.

The boy had converted all available space in his own room into a mechanical and electrical laboratory. It was filled with toys, books and games. Among the books were several telling boys how to make experiments. In one of these books was a description of various kinds of knots, among them being a "hangman's noose."

Mrs. Kahnweiler was absent in the late afternoon when Louis obtained a length of clothes line from Kate Tuohey, a maid, and went to his room to conduct experiments. Following his custom and pretending he required secrecy, the lad locked himself in.

The maid rapped on Louis' door at six o'clock to call him to dress for dinner. Going to the fifth floor, she reached a fire escape and descended to the fourth floor. Through the window she saw Louis hanging by a rope to a closet door.

Among the first to respond to her calls for aid was Claude Aire, electrician of the building. He broke in the door and cut the rope. Soon he had the noose unfastened. Telephone messages called two physicians and a policeman. A pulmotor was summoned, but the boy had been strangled to death.

Mrs. Kahnweiler returned while the excitement was at its height and when she learned what had happened she became hysterical and the physicians had to attend her.

After making the "hangman's noose" it was apparent that Louis had tried it by fastening the other end of the rope to a door knob and throwing the noose end over the top of the open closet door. Standing on a chair, he tied the noose about his neck. It is believed he was unable to release the noose and his struggles kicked the chair from under him on the highly polished floor.

THE ROB ROYS

—OR—

BOLD BOB, THE CAPTAIN OF THE TEAM

By DICK ELLISON

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XII. (continued)

"I done saw de hull ting, yo' pizen face skunk," she said in a loud, angry voice, while her eyes fairly popped out of her head, and her wool stood up in kinks. "I done saw hit all, an' I'se gwine ter fix yo' fo' shuah. I saw yo' put dat money into Marse Bob's pocket, an' den yo' sneaked off an' tried ter make out dat he done stole hit. Yo' am de pizenest skunk in dis part ob de county, an' if Marse Bob doan' lick yo' I'll do hit myself fo' shuah, an' doan' yo' fo'git hit. Yo' am——"

"My good woman, you must be insane," the young scoundrel answered, coolly, recovering himself, and trying hard to play his part. "Why should I put my money in MacGregor's pocket? I would naturally prefer to keep it in my own, would I not?"

"Dat hain't hit," Rosie broke in, coming still nearer. "Dat hain't hit. Ob course yo' want yo' own money, but yo' wanted ebrybuddy heah ter tink dat Marse Bob stole de money, fo' yo' hates him, an' yo' know hit. De reason why yo' hates him, am dat ebrybuddy else likes him, an' dey hain't got no use fo' yo', an' no wondah, fo' de debbil will nebber be satisfied till he gits yo'. Yo' can't bluff yo' nuncle, honey, an' doan' yo' try hit. Yo' Aunt Rosie was nebber yet caught nappin', an' she hain't a-goin' ter be at this late day."

"This is certainly a strange state of affairs," Professor Romaine remarked, thoughtfully and gravely.

"It's the strangest I ever knew of, at the same time it must be most thoroughly investigated. We must lose no time about it, either."

"We hain't gwine ter lose no time, an' doan' yo' fo'git hit," Rosie said, with a vigorous shake of her fist. "Fo' dat pizen face, he——"

"Rosie, I am astonished that you should have so much to say concerning the matter until it is time for me to ask you such questions as will be necessary," Professor Romaine interrupted gravely: "you are a valuable witness, to be sure, but you must await your turn."

"Ain't I doin' dat, boss? Golly, hain't I doin' dat?" the negress asked in surprise; "yo' jest gib me a chance at dat pizen face, an' I make him bow-legged fo' de res' ob his life, an' yo' Aunt Rosie kin do hit, she kin do hit as glouh an' yo'se bawn. I'se——"

"You must either be silent until I ask you to speak or leave the room," Professor Romaine said sternly. "I have no doubt whatever but that your evidence will be most valuable, but keep it to yourself until I ask for it."

And for a few moments Rosie was silent, although it was the hardest work of her life. However, she managed to hold her tongue, fearing she might be deprived of the pleasure of testifying against the youth she hated so.

"Now, Mr. Selden, tell me your part of the story," Prof. Romaine said, slowly, looking directly at Henry Selden, who dropped his eyes in guilt and fear. "Tell me the whole thing from beginning to end. Then I shall be able to judge."

Henry Selden's eyes drooped before that stern, questioning gaze. For an instant his lips were silent, and then, realizing how much depended upon it, he cleared his throat and went on:

"I put my hand in my pocket and felt the money there, before I approached the corner where Mr. MacGregor was standing. I felt it distinctly, and I did not miss it until after I had left him. While I was standing near him I felt some one brush roughly against me, but I did not dream they were trying to rob me. That, sir, is my part of the story, and as you saw for yourself, the money was found upon his person."

"But what is there to point out it was not placed there by some designing enemy of his?" Professor Romaine asked sharply, darting him a keen look. "Such things have happened before, they are apt to happen again."

"I know of no one who would do such a cowardly thing," Selden tried to say with dignity, but the effort was a failure, and he was once more forced to drop his guilty eyes. "I am sure I do not know any such person."

"Well, den I does, honey, an' hit am yo' own pizen self," Rosie muttered, longing to sail in and make it interesting for Mr. Henry Selden. "I knows who hit am, an' I'se gwine ter whale de stuffin' outen yo'. Goodness! what a pizen-face skunk yo' am, ter be suah."

"Now, Mr. MacGregor, let me hear what you have to say?" and Prof. Romaine spoke very kindly to our hero. "I hope this disgraceful charge against you may be proven utterly false and unfounded, and I believe it will."

"All I have to say is this, Prof. Romaine," Bold Bob answered in a clear, firm voice, while a red spot burned upon either pale cheek. "That I am perfectly innocent, although the money was found upon my person. How it came to be there I cannot say. Suffice it to say it was there, and all I can do is to protest my innocence, and pray heaven that I may be cleared of so disgraceful a charge. It is certainly the work of an enemy, and a vile, designing enemy at that! But I have this comfort—there

was never yet a wrong that was not made right in time, and those who sin are usually punished in the end. I am willing—ay, more than willing—to let affairs take their course.”

A deep and impressive silence reigned after the young man ceased speaking. Every one present felt the weight of his words, and they believed in his innocence, one and all. Professor Romaine, too, was deeply touched.

“And did you not feel any one jostle you at the time Mr. Selden mentions?” he asked.

“No, I did not know that there was any one near me,” was the frank reply. “I was busy talking with Miss Worth, Miss Voss and Mr. Roberts, therefore I had no time to think of anything else. Whoever put the money there, did it very nicely.”

“Well, then, it only remains for Rosie to testify,” Professor Romaine said, gravely. “Are you ready, Rosie?”

“Deed an’ ’deed I is, sah,” and, rolling her sleeves above her stalwart elbows, Rosie came forward, blood in her eyes. “I reckon dis chile done saw de hull ting, an’ now she’s gwine ter gib Mr. Pizen-face all he wants. Yo’ see hit am like dis, sah. Dar’s gwine ter be one ob de finest cake-walks dat yo’ eber heerd tell ob, an’ yo’ Aunt Rosie am nebber in her glory till yo’ see her at a cake-walk. An’ I reckoned I could git some mighty fine ideas ob a dress by comin’ in heah on der sly an’ watchin’ de frocks dat de ladies wore. Yo’ know I always goes in fo’ style, an’ I hain’t gwine ter let dat sassy Hannah Jones beat me. No, sah, yo’ Aunt Rosie takes de cake in dress ebbery day in de week, an’ she done gwine ter keep hit up. But dat hain’t de main point, sah. While I wus a-watchin’ an’ a-peekin’ fro’ de doah, I sees dat pizen-face slip up behind Marse Bob, an’ done chuck a big roll ob money in his pocket. I clar ter goodness, hit am de truf, de hull truf, an’ nuffin’ but de truf. Yo’ Aunt Rosie nebber lies, an’ yo’ know hit.”

“An’ I done see de same ting, mammy,” a shrill, childish voice suddenly came and wheeling quickly about Rosie saw her very promising offspring, Topsey, clinging to her skirts. “I done hid behind yo’ mammy, fo’ ter see de dresses an’ de nice tings, but Tip he wouldn’t stay fo’——”

“Go ’way dar, yo’ fo’ward chile, yo’ brack, thick-haired niggah.” Rosie exclaimed, giving her heiress a cuff on the side of the head that sent her spinning across the room with a howl of terror. “Go ’way dar, yo’ chunk ob brackness. What right yo’ got fo’ ter spy on yo’ mammy? I’ll break ebbery bone in dat brack buddy ob yo’se, an’ den we see how yo’ like hit. Whar am dat imp ob a Tip? Answer me, chile, fo’ I done wallop yo’.”

“Tip, he done went down ter de kitchen fo’ ter steal some ob dat cold chicken and jelly,” Topsey sobbed. “He done say dat he starve on de truck yo’ feed him, an’ he tole me dat he git some good feed under his jacket or bust a lung. I reckon yo’ fin’ him dar now. He said he wouldn’t touch de turkey, but he gwine ter hab some chicken or die. Go down an’ whale him, mammy, fo’ he am a debbil.”

“Yo’ jost bet yo’ last kink ob wool, chile, dat I whale de stuffin’ outen dat niggah,” Rosie retorted with a grin of delight. “Use gwine ter gib him some chicken dat he

won’t relish,” and away she rushed, vowing vengeance on the luckless Tip who even at that moment was stowing away the choicest portion of chicken beneath his waistcoat. A moment later wails of woe coming up from below announced the fact that Tip was not enjoying himself as well as he had a few moments before.

Then Sidney Worth stepped forward and in a clear, cold voice gave her testimony.

“I saw Mr. Selden close behind Mr. MacGregor,” she said very coolly, “just a few moments before the hue and cry about the missing money was raised. I had an idea then that something was up, and so I kept my eyes open. I knew there was mischief on hand and I meant to prevent it if possible. In the first place I knew that Mr. Selden had never liked Mr. MacGregor, for he was always jealous of his good looks and talents. I waited until all of your witnesses were examined before saying much, but now I will tell you the whole truth. I saw Henry Selden put that roll of bills in Robert MacGregor’s pocket.”

A breathless hush hovered over the room. No one spoke, yet at the same time they knew she uttered but the truth, for not a soul in the surrounding country would ever dare doubt Sidney Worth’s word. She was the very soul of truth and honor, and it was her testimony that really cleared Bold Bob. Thus he went forth once more, his name unsoiled, his character unblemished.

CHAPTER XIII.

FOR AT LEAST ONCE VIRTUE CONQUERS VICE.

A breathless silence followed Sidney’s words, and every one present looked into each other’s faces. Her words had more weight than that of all the others, for every one knew that Sidney Worth never spoke but the truth. Young and old, rich and poor, loved and respected her.

“Do you mean what you say, Miss Worth?” Prof. Romaine gasped. “Do you realize what you are saying?”

“I never make a remark unless I can prove it, Prof. Romaine.” Sidney answered, calmly and coolly. “I said that I saw Mr. Selden slip that roll of bills in Mr. MacGregor’s pocket, and if it were the last word I ever uttered, I should still say so. I am not a person to say a thing and then go back on it. I say now, as I said then, Mr. Selden put that money in Mr. MacGregor’s pocket for the sole purpose of making him out a thief in the eyes of his friends and comrades, but he has failed. I think my testimony, together with that of your cook, Prof. Romaine, should be sufficient to clear him. We all know Mr. Selden’s reputation, and we also know Mr. MacGregor’s. I say the captain of the Rob Roys is innocent, and every one else present must know the same thing.”

A cheer went up from a dozen different throats, for Bold Bob was a general favorite.

“Of course we know he is innocent,” they responded in chorns. “What! our captain, Bold Bob, a thief? The man who says so will get the worst thumping he ever had in all his life. No one can say a word against him and live. Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah for Bold Bob, the captain of the champion football team. None can beat them!”

(To be continued)

TIMELY TOPICS

The light of the Heligoland lighthouse is the most powerful in Germany, and one of the most powerful in the world. The light is an electric one, and consists of a cluster of three revolving lights, having the illuminating power of 10,000,000 candles. The lights are on the searchlight principle.

A single block of coal, six and a half feet long, five feet wide and about three feet thick, has arrived from Higbee, Mo., en route to San Francisco, where it will be placed on exhibition in the Missouri mining display. The specimen was received by Otto Rhul, who is preparing an exhibit. It weighs 4,250 pounds, and is securely crated in a framework made of timbers.

The torpedo-boat destroyer Cushing showed a wide margin above contract requirements on her official standardization trial. Her fastest mile was made at the rate of 30.6 knots per hour and the average of her five top speed runs, with and against the tide, was 29.68. The contract calls for 29 knots. A maximum of about 18,000 horsepower was developed.

Elmer Norgard, son of a wealthy rancher, did not steal from the Round Valley (Cal.) Indian Reservation one white calf with red ears, a jury in the United States District Court found a few days ago. The calf's value was placed at \$25. The case cost the Government \$15,000, it was said. A notched calf's ear that was to have figured as "Exhibit A" did not appear in the case. Daniel Deram, forest ranger, said his dog ate it.

The Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce estimates that labor is 20 per cent. more efficient in and about that city than is the case in Eastern cities, where it is held that extreme temperatures affect a man's working capacity. The Chamber of Commerce in a recent bulletin declared that, "figuring on a basis of 20 per cent. added labor efficiency, Los Angeles' climate would increase the actual labor assets of Pittsburgh more than \$300,000,000 per year. This is because of the almost entire absence of humidity, oppressive heat, and extreme cold."

The fire insurance losses in the United States in the last year were about \$200,720,000, an increase of \$28,000,000 over 1913, it was said at the annual meeting of the National Board of Fire Underwriters in the Waldorf-Astoria. The statement was made by W. N. Kremer, President of the board. He added that the companies last year took in \$333,647,000, an increase of \$9,000,000. Taxes increased 1.24 per cent., to \$9,120,000. The American fire insurance business of 1914, he asserted, represented an underwriting loss of 4.21 per cent. to the companies. Clarence E. Porter said the total loss from fires in the United States in 1914 was about \$221,000,000, exceeded only in 1904 and 1906. In the entire country six persons were sentenced for arson. E. G. Richards was chosen President of the board for 1915.

George L. Newberry, a professional aviator of Kirkwood, N. Y., was fatally injured the other afternoon when an aeroplane, with which he was giving an exhibition at a picnic held in Rensselaer Park by the Troy police, fell from a height of 400 feet into Oakwood Cemetery. Newberry was extricated from the ruins of his machine and hurried to a hospital, where he died in a few minutes. The accident was witnessed by more than 20,000 persons assembled in the park and on the hills adjoining. Newberry made one successful flight and returned to the park. Without alighting he arose in the air again and flew over the cemetery in which the veterans were holding their Memorial Day exercises. He was at a height estimated at 400 feet when there was a loud explosion, the machine turned over and fell like a plummet to the earth. Newberry was pinned beneath the machine and was unconscious when extricated.

The Zoological Society's Bulletin remarks that refusal of food is generally the first symptom that an animal or bird is sick. The ostrich is one of the most provoking in this respect, and, if heroic measures be not adopted, soon becomes so thin as to become a prey to some really dangerous ailment. A fine South African ostrich received from Arizona at the New York Zoological Gardens in Bronx Park last summer refused his breakfast on Dec. 23, 1914. He showed no other symptoms of illness. A week passed and he began to look thin. Keeper George Snyder, at considerable personal risk, then began a system of forcible feeding, ramming bolus after bolus of food wrapped in lettuce leaves down the throat of the unwilling bird. This treatment was kept up for more than six weeks, and the ostrich became so accustomed to it that he ceased to resist. On Feb. 6, 1915, he first evinced a willingness to feed himself, and within a short time his hunger strike was over.

Advices received by the Federal Sugar Refining Company from their German correspondent indicate that, given normal weather conditions, Germany will produce about 2,000,000 tons of raw sugar during the 1915-16 season. The statement of the Federal Sugar Refining Company's German correspondent added: "Since all communication between Germany and Chile has been interrupted our Government has worked with industrial and agricultural interests to promote the production of azotic fertilizers from coal and from the nitrogen of the air. Notwithstanding there are some complaints from farmers of the scarcity of fertilizers. Lack of labor is considered in some quarters to threaten the crop yields, but as far as can be judged it seems as if it would be less serious eventually than the want of fertilizers. The latest reports from all beet districts say that preparation of the soil has commenced generally and no complaint is heard about deficiency of labor. The wheat and rye fields look as promising as usual. It is estimated that Austria-Hungary will produce only 1,100,000 tons of raw sugar, or about 500,000 less than in former years."

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GOOD CURRENT NEWS ARTICLES

John Marshall has a large and vigorous grapevine growing on his home place, Apalachicola, Fla. The vine measures 2½ inches in diameter. Recently Mr. Marshall moved a decayed fence post near his residence, and after removing the post he discovered that this thrifty grapevine sprang up from the ground near this post, passed through the post and assumed its large diameter after emerging from the post.

According to a recent estimate of the United States Public Health Service, the number of persons in this country who are victims of the drug habit is about 70,000, and the number of doses of narcotic drugs consumed by them annually is about 850,000,000. This estimate is based on figures collected in the State of Tennessee, where under a recently enacted Anti-Narcotic Law 1,403 permits were issued in six months to persons petitioning for the privilege of using narcotic drugs, and the consumption of such drugs amounted to 8,480,200 average doses.

Declaring that the best thing for the young men of Cornell University is military training, Dr. Andrew D. White, first president of Cornell and ex-Ambassador to Germany, went on record at a banquet of the Cornell Cadet Corps May 18 in favor of continuing the present policy of military training at Cornell and other universities. "I would," he said, "have a nation of men who are peaceable, but who are ready for war. We are plunged into relations not only with Europe, but with the Pacific world, and we must be in a position so that we can have peace even if we must fight for it."

The impact of a pitched ball, which struck him behind the left ear while he was playing in a game of baseball at West Second Street Park, Pomona, recently, has brought about a condition which makes it impossible for Oscar Pitts to walk without staggering like a drunken man, and at times he finds it utterly impossible to stand up. Physicians say the blow fractured some bone of the ear and that the bone plays an important part in maintaining the equilibrium of the body. Fracturing the bone set up a disturbance which, two days after the accident occurred, threw the young man off his balance.

The Australian gold mines, for a time among the most productive in the world, appear to be giving out. The yield has been gradually declining for twelve years, and that of 1914, according to reports to the Comptroller of the Currency, was the lowest since 1896, amounting to only \$42,300,000, as against \$79,300,000 in 1903. The yield in the State of Victoria in 1914 was the smallest since 1851. The Australian gold yield, in fine ounces, has been as follows in the last three years: 2,049,910 in 1914, 2,205,061 in 1913; \$2,321,343 in 1912. The high-water mark was in 1903—3,827,064 ounces. The State of Victoria has given the world, since her mines were opened in 1851, more than \$1,435,618,000 of gold. Her largest production in a year was in 1856—3,053,744 ounces. The State of Western Australia has been the premier Australian gold bearer since the beginning of the present century, having supplied in the last fifteen years 23,000,000 ounces, as against \$9,000,000 by Victoria. The third largest gold producing State in Australia is Queensland.

GRINS AND CHUCKLES

Newcome—We had a nice mess of fish for dinner, last night. Bublely—I haven't the slightest doubt, old man—your cook once worked for us.

"Shall I administer gas before extracting your tooth?" asked the dentist. "Well," answered the fair patient from a back township, "if it doesn't cost any more I'd rather you'd give me electric light."

Alicia—Jack is so handsome. Gladys—Yes? Alicia—And so courteous. Gladys—Yes? Alicia—Always addresses me as "Fair Miss." Gladys—That's force of habit. Alicia—How so? Gladys—He used to be conductor on a street car!

"It's hard," said the sentimental landlady at the dinner table, "to think that this poor little lamb should be destroyed in its youth, just to cater to our appetites." "Yes," replied the smart boarder, struggling with his portion, "it is tough."

Willis—I am organizing a regiment for service in this war that will make them all sit up and take notice. Gillis—Good men, eh? Willis—Regular blood-curdlers. It is composed entirely of men who have been stung on Mexican mining schemes.

"How will you have your eggs cooked?" asked the waiter. "Make any difference in the cost of 'em?" inquired the cautious customer with the brimless hat and the ragged beard. "No." "Then cook them on the top of a slice of ham," said the customer, greatly relieved.

Johnny was sent to the cellar to draw a pitcher of cider. When he got back the guest commended him. "You must have good judgment to have filled the pitcher so accurately in the dark without running it over." "Aw, that ain't hard," replied Johnny. "You see, when the cider got up to the first joint of my thumb I stopped."

THE CRAZED BELLE.

By Paul Braddock

"Got a story for me this evening?"

"Well, I don't know——"

Then my uncle fell into a musing mood, and was silent for a minute or two.

"Did I ever tell you about the crazy belle?"

"No."

"Like to hear the story?"

"Yes."

"Seems to me, on second thought, that I have told this to you already."

"You have not."

"Very well."

This conversation occurred one winter evening, in the snug office of the asylum over which my uncle presided.

The person spoken to was an old friend, a life-long friend, in fact, who generally spent one or two evenings a week with the doctor.

"Come with me," said the latter, arising to his feet. "I will show you first the sequel to my tale."

Together they passed from the office, the doctor leading the way to a small room with a low-burning gas-jet.

"Will you turn up the gas, Tom?" said the doctor.

The latter did as requested, and then, turning to face the doctor, saw ranged against the opposite wall a table, covered with a sheet, beneath which was observable the shape of a human form.

Tom shuddered slightly.

Observing this, the doctor laughed, and rather jokingly remarked:

"I should have supposed you were seasoned by this time, coming here as long as you have."

Frequent contact with death hardens people to it, just as a doctor, from seeing pain so frequently, becomes callous to suffering, and has little sympathy for the patient.

The doctor drew back the sheet as he uttered the words quoted.

His friend uttered a gasping cry as his eyes rested on the body.

And truly it was an awful sight. The body was that of a woman. This much could be told from her clothing, but no other outward clew was there, unless it might be the slenderness and shapeliness of the figure.

"You turn away in horror, Tom! Well, this woman lying here was once handsome, if not the handsomest woman in New York."

"It seems hardly possible," was the muttered reply.

Reverently covering up the body, the doctor preceded his guest, conducting him back to the cozy office, where the following tale was told:

Uriah Hudson, one of the oldest and best-known merchants of New York, was the father of two very handsome girls. They were his only children, and of them he thought the world.

Hudson was as upright and honest a man as ever stepped in two shoes—punctiliously honest, if one may so speak. He was scrupulously exact in keeping his word, and took

care to impress his views on those with whom he came into daily contact.

Mrs. Hudson was a small woman of delicate build, a fine-grained person, who was little more than a bundle of high-strung nerves.

The two girls inherited from their parents the exactitude of the father combined with the nervous organization of the mother.

The eldest was Nettie; the younger Laura.

The death of Mrs. Hudson was a heavy blow to them all, and rendered inevitable the postponement of Nettie's marriage to a young fellow who had waited on her some time, and whom she was privately engaged to.

Before the year of mourning had expired, the young man proved faithless to his trust. A newer and fresher face had attracted him.

Nettie was so blinded by her affection that she still believed in and trusted him, when to everybody else the truth was too plain. Deserted! At last, like a thunderbolt, this truth was forced on her understanding.

It bowed her head with shame; how could she face the world again, she who had been jilted by a man for whom she had confessed her love? Her heart was wrung with anguish, and when Laura would have comforted her, she only dumbly moaned:

"Laura, let me fight the terrible battle alone! I am going to my room and I must not be disturbed."

Poor Nettie! She staggered away to her room.

Her sister did not intrude on her; but several times within the next hour she glided softly to and paused outside the door. She could hear Nettie's soft voice murmuring as if she were praying.

Before going to rest for the night, Laura again paused at her sister's door. All was silence within; she would not venture to enter, as she might disturb her sister's repose.

When Nettie failed to come down the next morning, Laura visited her room. Knocking at the door several times, and receiving no response, she opened it.

There lay Nettie on the bed, in an easy, negligent attitude, as if slumbering.

So she was, but it was that slumber which knows no waking on earth.

A wild cry from the lips of Laura drew her father and the servants to the spot.

A physician was hastily sent for, but Nettie was beyond assistance from him. She had died from a ruptured heart, and her death cast a gloom on that household that never was removed.

The world at large never learned the true history of Nettie's engagement, desertion, despair and death!

A year rolled away. Then Laura had a suitor, another—another, and a dozen of them.

She had allowed herself to be persuaded to go into society, and at once she found a dozen or more men ready to lay their hearts at her feet.

When they would have spoken of love, she shook her head. She would never love (with a shudder); the terrible conclusion to her sister's love was sufficient.

So she felt. But there came a time when she awoke to the fact that, in spite of herself, she had learned to love, and deeply, too, and what was more, her better judgment

informed her that the object of her love was unworthy of it.

Vainly she struggled against her passion, until at last, worn out, hoping for the best, she gave herself into Harry Bishop's arms.

The latter personage was a fashionable man, of good family, but having long since run through all that he had ever had, was now no more than a shrewd fortune-hunter.

Laura was an only child; her father was reputed wealthy, and Harry Bishop had laid siege to her heart, without himself possessing a single spark of affection for her.

Soon after this a short illness of Mr. Hudson's ended fatally.

Now came out the truth in regard to his actual wealth, and as is only too frequently the case, his great wealth was only a myth.

Going to the other extreme, report said that when Mr. Hudson's debts were paid, not a cent would be left.

"Phew!" whistled Harry Bishop, when he heard this. "In that case—— What's to be done?"

It is needless for us to follow up his course of reasoning.

"Do you suppose it's so?" he asked a friend in an off-hand way, Hudson's death and affairs having been alluded to.

"I certainly do," was the reply. "Where there's so much smoke there must be some fire."

"It's lucky I found out in time," muttered Harry Bishop.

And Laura was left to wonder why her lover did not come. In her hour of trouble she thought he should be at her side.

But he did not come.

Perhaps he had been suddenly called away from the city on business, and she would receive a note to that effect? But none came.

Perhaps he was sick? But her fears on this head were groundless, as she learned from a lady friend that she had that day seen Bishop.

Gradually, against her wishes, the truth began dawning upon her. She had never been able to force herself to believe him perfect in character, and the way being open, the entering wedge was already in, and it was not long before she believed the worst of him.

She remembered how her sister had died from the faithlessness of another of the sex, and into her eyes there slowly crept a strange flame. The muscles about her mouth began to gather, until at length her lips were ever wreathed with an expression of cruel resolution.

She was stronger physically than her sister, and the blow did not kill her. No, she lived, and hour after hour steadily brooded over her sister's death, and her own wrongs.

"He sought my love and now tramples it under-foot. Woe be unto him!"

This was the burden of what she said, in a bitter—bitter tone.

Occasionally came a caller, and every time the door-bell rang there came into her face an expectant look, while her lips would be closely compressed and her hand would steal toward her bosom. But when she learned that it was not Bishop she became listless at once.

Soon her brows were always contracted: she seemed not to hear when she was addressed, or if she answered it was in a rambling and preoccupied way.

Now and then she frightened the servants by a flash of ugly temper: she, who had ever been so equable and kind.

At last they began to whisper among themselves that her mind had been unsettled by her father's death.

Fine-grained, high-strung, of an exceedingly nervous temperament, with no one in sympathy with her, so that she could relieve her mind by sharing her troubles with another, her thoughts turned constantly inward on themselves; from pondering she had gone to brooding, from brooding to the sullen silence and gloomy reviewing of a diseased mind.

"He has not come!" she said, as she left the parlor one evening on the stroke of ten. "There is no longer any reason to doubt. In the morning I will send for him, and when he comes——"

There was a murderous gleam in her eyes as she paused thus abruptly.

In the morning she did send for him, and Bishop, vexed, and, feeling like a guilty knave, could not pass by her message in silence.

A quiver ran through the frame of Laura as the bell rang. It proved to be her father's lawyer, and the executors of his will and several creditors.

She ordered them shown into the library. She would see them in a few minutes, she said.

Again the bell rang.

Into the parlor the servant showed the recreant lover.

The servant departed, leaving him shame-faced in the presence of the woman whom he had wronged, whose affections he had outraged in winning and casting them from him.

She did not wait for him to speak.

"Wretch!" she exclaimed, her eyes glancing scorn and resentment, her voice breathing stern determination. "Wretch, down on your knees, and beg my pardon!"

Left to himself, the guilty-feeling wretch might have done this. Ordered, he would not.

Her hand flew to the bosom of her dress, and forth she drew a revolver, and fired, killing him, and then turned the revolver upon herself.

That is my tale for to-night, and I hope you have been interested in hearing of the Crazy Belle.

Seventy-five cats and dogs were to be executed the other evening in the gas tank in the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals building at Twenty-fourth Street and Avenue A, New York. The condemned animals were dumped into the tank by Frederick McDonald of No. 4622 Broadway and Harry McClintock of Inwood, L. I., and when all was ready the top was fastened down and one of the executioners got ready to turn on the gas. Before he could do this there came an explosion. The top of the tank was blown off and it literally rained cats and dogs. Twenty windows in the front of the building were blown out, many of them going across the street and striking the front of the J. J. Little Building, where there is a strike of paper handlers. Every one of the seventy-five dogs and cats was killed instantly and McDonald and McClintock were bruised and cut.

NEWS OF THE DAY

"For 2 inches of the left leg at \$8,350 per inch, \$16,700," is the bill that Earl Parsons of Mount Bethel, Pa., is trying to collect from the Lehigh and New England Railroad in a suit for damages just brought. Employed on the road as a trainman, he asserts that he was instructed by the Yardmaster at Penn Argyl, who told him that the track was clear, to take a train to a crossover one night last year. His train crashed into some empty cars and he was caught between two of them. When he left the hospital, four months later, one leg was 2 inches shorter than the other.

Owners of Newfoundland sealing vessels are considering the use of aeroplanes as an aid to the industry in which they are engaged. It is proposed that just before the opening of the season next year two experienced aviators be engaged to visit the east coast and the Gulf of St. Lawrence for the purpose of locating the herds of seals. The information thus obtained would enable the fleet to sail directly for the scene of the hunt, instead of wasting much time in searching for the animals. The present season, which ended on March 1, was a failure, the total catch being less than 50,000 pelts.

Premier Asquith has just reported that 50,000 women of Great Britain have been registered for work which has freed men to go to the front. In one engineering establishment in Newcastle he saw 3,000 women making shells. Young women of the Belgian coalfields near Charleroi have gone into the pits to take the places of their husbands, fathers and brothers now fighting in Flanders. Without the work of these women there would be a dearth of fuel in Belgium. Without their work there would be no support for the families they represent in the hard work of the world, but not at the ballot box.

Upon the close of the New Jersey State Agricultural College this month a number of young men will be available for the summer for work upon fruit and truck farms. Several of these young men have had one or more seasons experience with the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station in the packing of peaches, while others have had practical experience upon fruit and truck farms; some have had only general farm experience, but are desirous of securing places upon farms during the summer. Fruit growers and truckers who are likely to be in need of young men who can pack fruit and do other work should correspond with the horticulturist at the station.

A. B. Coates, a well-known mining man of Virginia, Minn., got a surprise in the express the other day. It was a bottle of whisky from a Kentucky distillery that he had not ordered. The odd thing about the gift was that the liquor was in a bottle that Mr. Coates emptied with a party of friends while steaming down the River Nile, in Africa, about a year ago and threw into the rocky stream. In the bottle he had placed a slip of pa-

per bearing his name and address. Some one found the bottle and forwarded it to the distillery, where it was filled and sent to Mr. Coates with the liquor factory's compliments. The original bottle was presented to Mr. Coates by a local friend when he started on his African trip.

Found guilty and convicted of cruelty to animals, fined \$100 and additional costs aggregating \$163.20, and given a sentence of thirty days in the county jail, is the penalty of one Wilbur G. Moore of Tippecanoe county, Indiana. The case attracted wide attention and is perhaps one of the most startling of its kind in the history of the American court. The State of Indiana was prompt in prosecuting, but considering the horrid facts that were brought forth at the trial, the offender probably received a light sentence. Some fifteen or sixteen years ago, the prosecution says, Moore's father, while driving a beautiful team of spirited horses, owned by himself, had a runaway. After the frightened animals had run a considerable distance the driver was somehow thrown from the vehicle, receiving such a severe injury that he soon died. From that day until this, the court avers, the plaintiff has kept these two poor mouse-colored horses in close confinement, having locked them up in a barn night and day for the remainder of their lives. It is further stated that they had only scanty food and water supply and poor bedding the entire time of their imprisonment. Recently one of the animals died, when the authorities investigated the case. The remaining horse was immediately released and given the best of attention.

The Bethlehem Steel Company, of Bethlehem, Pa., is still receiving immense orders from the British Government and is fully prepared to execute them with promptness. Some idea of the work in hand may be gathered from a dispatch to the New York Herald from Bethlehem May 19, which says that the company on that day received an order for 8,000 cannon from Lord Kitchener, of the British War Office. The order was accompanied by a check for \$16,150,000, part of which is for work already done for the British Government, and part as an advance payment for material. The cannon ordered are field pieces of a kind that can be turned out in about a month, and the Bethlehem company is well equipped to make them faster than any other concern, the forging, boring, machining and tempering being done with great rapidity by means of modern machinery. In the matter of equipment it is declared Bethlehem is as well furnished as Krupps, and in many departments surpasses the great German plant. The projectile contracts are well under way and shells are being made so rapidly that Bethlehem is fast catching up with the demands of Lord Kitchener. Shrapnel now is being turned out at the rate of 12,000 a day, and of the one-pounders and smaller shells the product is 50,000 and upward every twenty-four hours. Buildings are being erected and machinery installed largely to increase the output of shrapnel.

INTERESTING ARTICLES

CAPTURE OF 19 COYOTES.

Capturing nineteen coyotes in one day Walter Mulske and F. A. Scheirmeister, Hazelton, N. D., got \$47.50 in bounties for their work. They found two dens from which they caught the young coyotes and they also landed some of the old ones.

A PREHISTORIC SNAKE.

What is supposed to be the skull of a huge snake of prehistoric times has been unearthed by James Eslinger on his farm, in Veale Township, Ind. Mr. Eslinger at the time was ploughing in a swamp which had never before been ploughed. The skull is eight inches long, four inches wide and four inches thick. The eye sockets are one and a half inches in diameter. Mr. Eslinger estimates that if the body was in proportion to the size of the skull it would have weighed nearly 500 pounds.

"SINGING PRISONERS" WERE PLANNING TO BREAK JAIL.

Jail officers at Rome, Ga., have made a queer discovery. When prisoners begin to sing just as though their hearts are full of innocence and joy, they are about to break jail, and maim or murder anyone who attempts to prevent them. Recently, when there was an outburst of joyful song among the white prisoners in the Floyd County Jail, the Sheriff made an inspection. He found that the bars of one window had been broken, and that pieces of steel and wire were hidden under a mattress.

EVERYBODY IN OVERALLS.

Since the boys and girls of the Hickory High School, Hickory, Miss., were sent home one day recently for wearing overalls and aprons to school, a mass meeting of farmers called to discuss economic and political questions adopted a resolution indorsing those schools of the county which permit and encourage the wearing of cotton and recommended the adoption of the ideal by all the public schools as an encouragement of the "Grown-in-Mississippi" movement. The principals of several schools in the county not only permit it but wear overalls to school themselves.

TY COBB VERSUS WALTER JOHNSON.

Walter Johnson has faced Cobb in the capacity of pitcher just 133 times, and of that many times at bat the champion batsman of the American League has been sent back to the bench 109 times hitless, the gentleman from Georgia failing to swat the ball in his usual consistent and blithe-some manner when facing the consistent Mr. Johnson. So Walter Johnson has the honor of being about the only hurler to hold the fiery Cobb, the champion batsman of the Tigers and the world, in subjugation. In the 133 times that Cobb faced the Washington star he made 31 base hits, 9 runs; just 6 of the hits were better than singles, consisting of three doubles and three triples. These figures give Cobb a batting average for the eight seasons he has maintained a calling acquaintance with Mr. Johnson of .233.

JAPANESE BOOM IN SHIPBUILDING.

The scarcity of steamers all over the world, owing to the enormous number of vessels taken off their ordinary runs for transport purposes, has led to an enormous increase in freights, and on some lines rates are as much as three or four times those charged in normal times. A steamer of about 2,500 tons, which formerly could be chartered for \$2,500 a month, is now offered at \$7,500, and even at this price it is difficult to get a ship. The Asahi says the steamer Koju-maru, 3,800 tons, which has just been sold for \$335,000, was purchased by her last owner (Japanese) for \$185,000 five years ago, and the steamer has been now transferred to a foreign flag, a complete reversal of the usual practice. It is absolutely impossible for Japanese to purchase foreign steamers at present. Shipbuilding is booming, and Japan is extra busy. The Kawasaki yard has orders for at least six new vessels, and the Mitsu Bishi yard at Nagasaki as many. The Osaka Ironworks built last year two vessels, the Peking-maru and the Nanking-maru, each of 3,000 tons, on the Isherwood system (that is, with the frames or ribs running longitudinally instead of transversely), and they have booked orders for eight more sister vessels on the same plan. There is some difficulty in getting a sufficient supply of steel plates and angles to keep pace with this activity. The Yawata Steelworks are full up with Nippon Yusen Kaisha orders, and the Osaka Ironworks have had to go to Pittsburgh for their materials.

BIG DESTROYER LAUNCHED.

The torpedo boat destroyer Jacob Jones was launched May 29 at the yard of the New York Shipbuilding Company, with Mrs. Jerome Crittenden of Flushing, L. I., a great-granddaughter of Captain Jacob Jones, for whom the vessel was named, as sponsor. The Jacob Jones is one of the largest destroyers in any navy, having a length of 315 feet and a displacement of 1,150 tons. A feature is the accommodations for her crew of 100 men, which are an advance over anything attempted heretofore in a boat of her class. She will have a capacity for 290 tons of oil fuel. Her engines will develop 17,000 horse-power, and are to produce a speed of not less than 29½ knots. She is armed with four 4-inch guns and four 21-inch torpedo tubes.

Captain Jacob Jones, for whom the vessel was named, had a long and distinguished career in the navy in the early nineteenth century. He entered the navy in 1790, was captured by the Tripolitans on the frigate Philadelphia in 1803, and when the war of 1812 broke out was in command of the brig Wasp. On October 18 of that year he captured the British sloop-of-war Frolic after a hard fight, but he was immediately afterward forced to surrender to the Poictiers, a ship of the line. He was immediately awarded a medal by Congress on his return to the United States, and was placed in command of the frigate Macedonian. After the war he commanded squadrons in the Mediterranean and the Pacific.

IMITATION GOLD TEETH.



Gold plated tooth, shape made so that it will fit any tooth. Price, 5c., postpaid.
H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

GOOD LUCK PUZZLE.



It consists of three horseshoes fastened together. Only a very clever person can take off the closed horseshoe from the two linked horseshoes. But it can be done in a moment when the secret is known. Price, by mail, 10c. each.
WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



VANISHING COINS.—A coin held in the palm of the hand is made to vanish when the hand is closed. Only one hand used. No practice required. Wonderful effect. Price, 25c.
C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

TRICK CUP.



Made of natural white wood turned, with two compartments; a round, black ball fits on those compartments; the other is a stationary ball. By a little practice you make the black ball vanish; a great trick novelty and immense seller. Price, 10c., postpaid.
WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

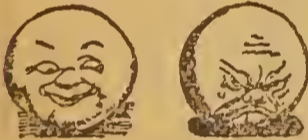
SLICK TRICK PENCIL.



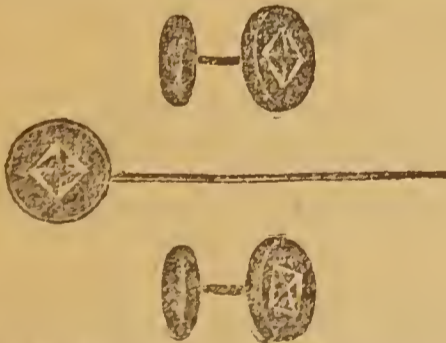
This one is a hummer! It is to all appearances an ordinary, but expensive lead pencil, with nickel trimmings. If your friend wants your pencil for a moment, hand it to him. When he attempts to write with it, the end instantly turns up, and he cannot write a stroke. Price, 10c., postpaid.

H. F. LANG,
1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

HOT AIR CARDS



There are 8 cards in a pack. They are nicely printed on good bristol-board, and contain the funniest literature ever composed, such as "Professor Huggem, hugging and kissing done in the very latest style," a Liar's License, a membership card for the Down and Out Club, and other comical poetry and prose. Every card guaranteed to make the girls giggle, the boys to laugh, and the old folks to roar. If you are looking for fun, get a pack. Price 10 cents a pack, by mail, post-paid
WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



GOLD PLATED COMBINATION SET.—With square turquoise stones. Price, 10c., postpaid.
WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

SPRING TOPS



Something new for the boys. A top you can spin without a string. This is a decided novelty. It is of large size, made of brass, and has a heavy balance rim. The shank contains a powerful spring and has an outer casing. The top of the shank has a milled edge for winding it up. When wound, you merely lift the outer casing, and the top spins at such a rapid speed that the balance rim keeps it going a long time. Without doubt the handsomest and best top on the market. Price 12 cents each, by mail, post-paid
H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

MARBLE VASE.



A clever and puzzling effect, easy to do; the apparatus can be minutely examined. Effect: A marble can be made to pass from the hand into the closed vase, which a moment before was shown empty. This is a beautiful enameled turned wood vase. Price, 20c.
C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

NAME CARDS



The newest fad in picture postals. They are beautifully lithographed in a variety of colors and have various names, such as Harry, Edith, etc., printed on the reverse side. Just the thing to mail to your friends. Price 6 for 10 cents, by mail, postpaid.
H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

DICE WATCHES



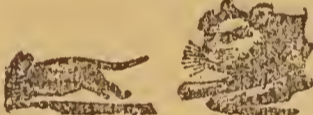
One of our best novelties. About the size of a watch, with a nickel case. A glass face encloses several ivory dice. On the rim of the case is a spring. By pressing it the dice are spun and scattered. The most intensely interesting games can be played with it. It can be carried in the vest pocket. Formerly sold for \$1.00. Price, 30c. each, by mail, postpaid.
WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

SURPRISE PERFUME BOTTLE.



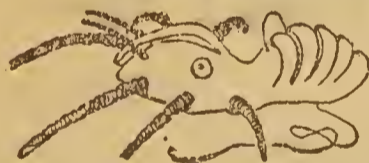
Those in the joke may freely smell the perfume in the bottle, but the uninitiated, on removing the cork will receive the contents in his hands. This is a simple and clever joke. Price, 10c. each by mail, postpaid; 3 for 25c.
H. F. LANG,
1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

THE AUTOMATIC RUNNING MOUSE



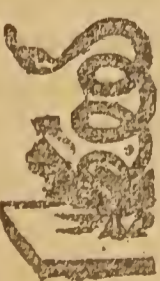
This mouse is so nearly a perfect imitation of the live animal as to not only deceive the ladies, but to even deceive the cat. Inside each mouse is a set of clock work which you wind up with a key, then place the mouse on the floor and it will run rapidly in every direction in a circle across the floor backward and forward as if to get away. Suddenly set it agoing in a room where there are ladies, and you will have the fun of hearing them scream and jump upon the chairs to escape the little rodent. This mechanical mouse is well worth 50c., but we will sell it for 30c., and send it by mail post-paid.
WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

THE HIDEOUS SPIDER.



Fun for everybody with one of these handsome brutes. His body is 3 inches long, beautifully enamelled green, with white ridges, yellow speckles, bulging eyes, and a big red mouth. He is armed with six legs and two upright feelers, made of flexible spiral springs. A dark, invisible thread attached to his body lets you shake him in the air before your friends' eyes, when the legs wiggle in a most natural, lifelike manner. Guaranteed to make any lady howl and to scare the bravest hero on earth out of his boots. Price by mail, 10c. each.
WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

EGGS OF PHARAOH'S SERPENTS.



A wonderful and startling novelty! "Pharaoh's Serpents" are produced from a small egg, no larger than a pea. Place one of them on a plate, touch fire to it with a common match, and instantly a large serpent, a yard or more in length, slowly uncoils itself from the burning egg. Each serpent assumes a different position. One will appear to be gliding over the ground, with head erect, as though spying danger; another will coil itself up, as if preparing for the fatal spring upon its victim, while another will stretch out lazily, apparently enjoying its usual noonday nap. Immediately after the egg stops burning, the serpent hardens, and may afterward be kept as an amusing curiosity. They are put up in wooden boxes, twelve eggs in a box. Price, 8c., 3 boxes for 20c.; 1 dozen boxes for 60c. sent by mail, postpaid.
WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

GREENBACKS

Pack of \$1,000 Stage Bills, 10c; 3 packs, 25c. Send for a pack and show the boys what a WAD you carry.
C. A. NICHOLS, JR., Box 90, Chill, N. Y.

Old Coins Wanted. \$1 to \$500 paid for hundreds of coins dated before 1895. Send 10c for our illustrated coin value book, 4x7; get posted, Clarke & Co., Box 95, Le Roy, N. Y.

FLY-APART PENCILS



The party who monkeys with this pencil suddenly finds it falling to pieces in his hands. You can scare the wits out of him by saying he will have to pay for it. But it is easy to assemble the pencil again in readiness for another victim. You can have 60 yards of joy to the minute with this innocent-looking little device. Price, 15c. each, by mail, postpaid.
C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

STRING PUZZLE



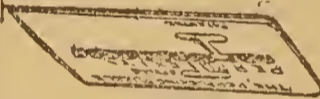
This puzzle is a wonder. It consists of two pieces of wood. A hole is bored through the upper end of both. A red string passes through the holes. Take a knife, insert it between the wooden blocks and cut upwards. You separate the pieces of wood, and the string is apparently cut in two. Close the blocks together, seize an end of the string, and you can pull the entire cord through the holes, absolutely—not cut. Very mystifying. Price, 12c. each, by mail, postpaid.
WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

TANGO TOP



A brand new novelty. More fun than a circus. You spin the post with your fingers, and the snake tangoes all around the top of the circular metal box, without falling off, although it is not fastened in any way. When the post stops spinning, the snake drops from the lid. What is the secret of its great attraction to the post? The marvel of the age. Price, 10c. each, by mail, postpaid.
C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

PERPLEXITY PUZZLE



One of the most exasperating puzzles, calculated to make a saint swear. It is very hard to do this puzzle, but it can be done. It is made of highly nickeled metal. The trick is to so arrange the buttons in the slots that the letters spell the word "perplexity." Your chance of succeeding is very slim until you get the hang of the thing. Price 15c. each, by mail, postpaid.
FRANK SMITH, 383 Lenox Ave., N. Y.

SURPRISE KINEMATOGRAPH.



The greatest hit of the season! It consists of a small metal, nickeled tube, with a lens eye view, which shows a pretty ballet girl in tights. Hand it to a friend, who will be delighted with the first picture; tell him to turn the screw in center of instrument to change the views, when a stream of water squirts into his face, much to his disgust. Anyone who has not seen this kinematograph in operation is sure to be caught every time. The instrument can be refilled with water in an instant, ready for the next customer. Price 25c. by mail, postpaid.
WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



"KNOCK-OUT" CARD TRICK.—Five cards are shown, front and back, and there are no two cards alike. You place some of them in a handkerchief and ask any person to hold them by the corners in full view of the audience. You now take the remaining cards and request anyone to name any card shown. This done, you repeat the name of the card and state that you will cause it to invisibly leave your hand and pass into the handkerchief, where it will be found among the other cards. At the word "Go!" you show that the chosen card has vanished, leaving absolutely only two cards. The handkerchief is unfolded by any person, and in it is found the identical card. Price, 10c.
WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

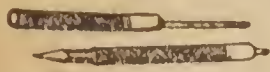
TRICK MATCHES.



Consist of a Swedish safety box, filled with matches, which will not light. Just the thing to 'cure' the match borrowing habit. Price, 5c., postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

JUMPING JACK PENCIL.



This pencil is made up in handsome style and looks so inviting that every one will want to look at it. The natural thing to do is to write with it, and just as soon as your friend tries to write, the entire inside of the pencil flies back like a jumping jack, and "Mr. Nosy" will be frightened stiff. It is one of our best pencil tricks and you will have a hard job trying to keep it. Your friends will try to take it from you. Price by mail, postpaid, 10c. each.

FRANK SMITH, 383 Lenox Ave., N. Y.

NEW SURPRISE NOVELTY.



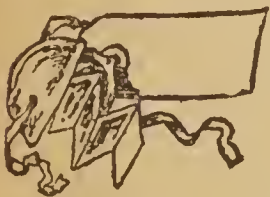
Foxy Grandpa, Mr. Peewee and other comical faces artistically colored, to which is attached a long rubber tube, connected with a rubber ball, which can be filled with water, the rubber ball being carried in the pocket, a slight pressure on the bulb causes a long stream, the result can easily be seen.

Price, 15c.,

Postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

NEW YORK IN A NUTSHELL.



25 Colored Views of the Big City in an English walnut shell, prettily hinged with ribbon, to which a small tag is attached. The nut contains 25 beautifully lithographed views of the principal points of interest in and around New York City. You can address the tag, put on a stamp, and mail it. A nice souvenir to mail to your distant friends.

Price, by mail, 10c. each.
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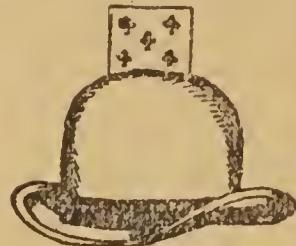


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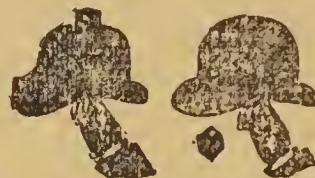
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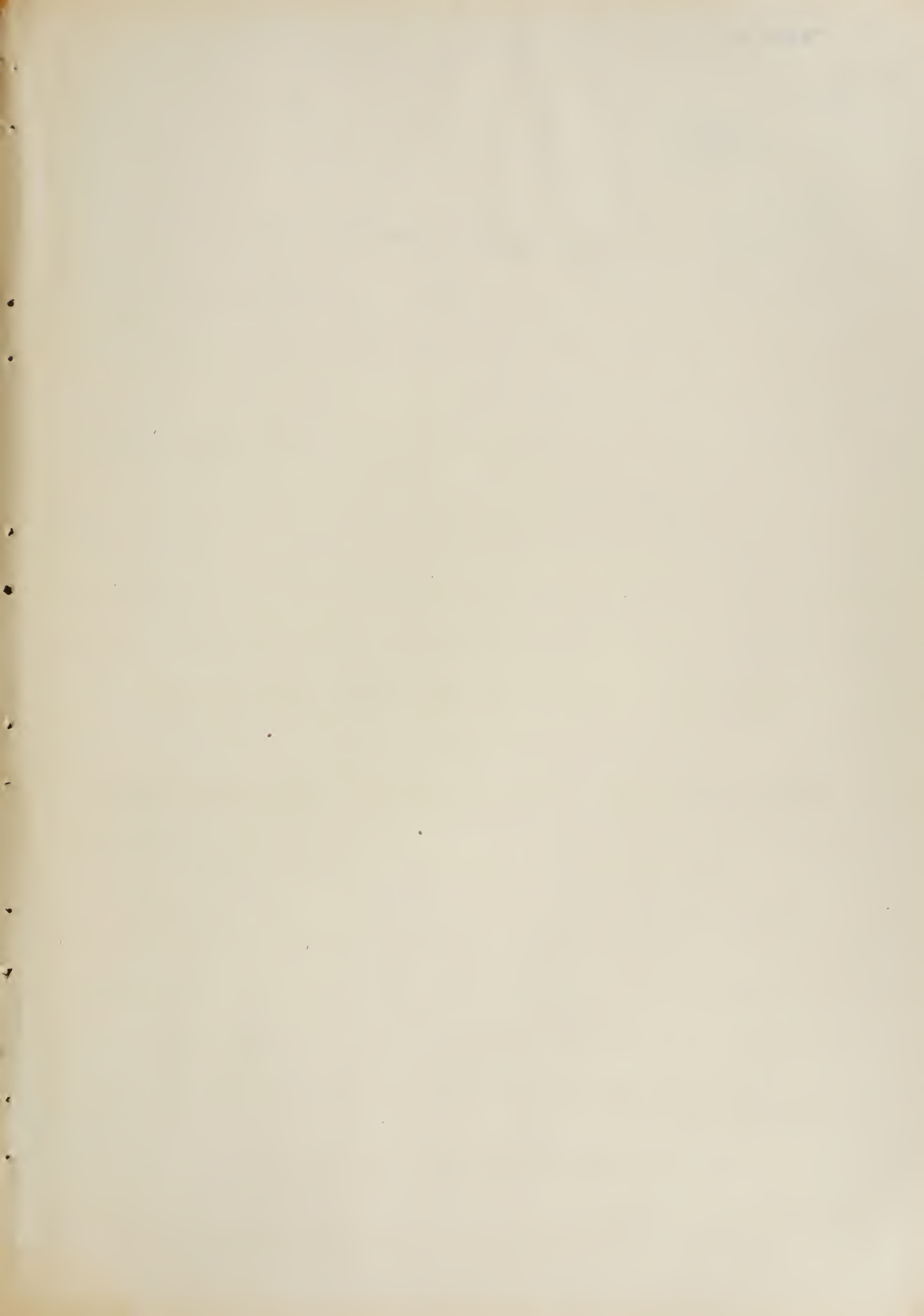
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